SUDDENLY THE DOOR OPENED AND DENIS APPEARED.

Inclusive Edition

# THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
# Guy de Maupassant

## MME. TELLIER'S ESTABLISHMENT
## A FAMILY
*and other stories*

Translations, Critical and Interpretative Essays by


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FRONTISPIECES BY J. E. ALLEN

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# MADAME TELLIER'S ESTABLISHMENT

## PART I

THEY went there every evening about eleven o'clock, just as they would go to the club. Six or eight of them; always the same set, not fast men, but respectable tradesmen, and young men in government or some other employ, and they would drink their Chartreuse, and laugh with the girls, or else talk seriously with Madame Tellier, whom everybody respected, and then they would go home at twelve o'clock! The younger men would sometimes stay later.

It was a small, comfortable house painted yellow, at the corner of a street behind Saint Etienne's church, and from the windows one could see the docks full of ships being unloaded, the big salt marsh, and, rising beyond it, the Virgin's Hill with its old gray chapel.

Madame Tellier, who came of a respectable fam-

ily of peasant proprietors in the Department of the Eure, had taken up her profession just as she would have become a milliner or dressmaker. The prejudice which is so violent and deeply rooted in large towns does not exist in the country places in Normandy. The peasant says:

"It is a paying business," and he sends his daughter to keep an establishment of this character just as he would send her to keep a girls' school.

She had inherited the house from an old uncle, to whom it had belonged. Monsieur and Madame Tellier, who had formerly been innkeepers near Yvetot, had immediately sold their house, as they thought that the business at Fécamp was more profitable, and they arrived one fine morning to assume the direction of the enterprise, which was declining on account of the absence of the proprietors, who were good people enough in their way, and who soon made themselves liked by their staff and their neighbors.

Monsieur died of apoplexy two years later, for as the new place kept him in idleness and without any exercise, he had grown excessively stout, and his health had suffered. Since she had been a widow, all the frequenters of the establishment made much of her; but people said that personally she was quite virtuous, and even the girls in the house could not discover anything against her. She was tall, stout and affable, and her complexion, which had become pale in the dimness of her house, the shutters of which were scarcely ever opened, shone as if it had been varnished. She had a fringe of curly false hair, which gave her a juvenile look, that contrasted strongly with the ripeness of her figure. She was always smiling and cheerful, and was fond of

a joke, but there was a shade of reserve about her, which her occupation had not quite made her lose. Coarse words always shocked her, and when any young fellow who had been badly brought up called her establishment a hard name, she was angry and disgusted.

In a word, she had a refined mind, and although she treated her women as friends, yet she very frequently used to say that " she and they were not made of the same stuff."

Sometimes during the week, she would hire a carriage and take some of her girls into the country, where they used to enjoy themselves on the grass by the side of the little river. They were like a lot of girls let out from school, and would run races and play childish games. They had a cold dinner on the grass, and drank cider, and went home at night with a delicious feeling of fatigue, and in the carriage they kissed Madame Tellier as their kind mother, who was full of goodness and complaisance.

The house had two entrances. At the corner there was a sort of tap-room, which sailors and the lower orders frequented at night, and she had two girls whose special duty it was to wait on them with the assistance of Frederic, a short, light-haired, beardless fellow, as strong as a horse. They set the half bottles of wine and the jugs of beer on the shaky marble tables before the customers, and then urged the men to drink.

The three other girls—there were only five of them—formed a kind of aristocracy, and they remained with the company on the first floor, unless they were wanted downstairs and there was nobody on the first floor. The salon of Jupiter, where the tradesmen used to meet, was papered in blue, and

embellished with a large drawing representing Leda and the swan. The room was reached by a winding staircase, through a narrow door opening on the street, and above this door a lantern inclosed in wire, such as one still sees in some towns, at the foot of the shrine of some saint, burned all night long.

The house, which was old and damp, smelt slightly of mildew. At times there was an odor of eau de Cologne in the passages, or sometimes from a half-open door downstairs the noisy mirth of the common men sitting and drinking rose to the first floor, much to the disgust of the gentlemen who were there. Madame Tellier, who was on friendly terms with her customers, did not leave the room, and took much interest in what was going on in the town, and they regularly told her all the news. Her serious conversation was a change from the ceaseless chatter of the three women; it was a rest from the obscene jokes of those stout individuals who every evening indulged in the commonplace debauchery of drinking a glass of liqueur in company with common women.

The names of the girls on the first floor were Fernande, Raphaele, and Rosa, the Jade. As the staff was limited, Madame had endeavored that each member of it should be a pattern, an epitome of the feminine type, so that every customer might find as nearly as possible the realization of his ideal. Fernande represented the handsome blonde; she was very tall, rather fat, and lazy; a country girl, who could not get rid of her freckles, and whose short, light, almost colorless, tow-like hair, like combed-out hemp, barely covered her head.

Raphaele, who came from Marseilles, played the

indispensable part of the handsome Jewess, and was thin, with high cheekbones, which were covered with rouge, and black hair, covered with pomatum, which curled on her forehead. Her eyes would have been handsome, if the right one had not had a speck in it. Her Roman nose came down over a square jaw, where two false upper teeth contrasted strangely with the bad color of the rest.

Rosa was a little roll of fat, nearly all body, with very short legs, and from morning till night she sang songs, which were alternately *risque* or sentimental, in a harsh voice; told silly, interminable tales, and only stopped talking in order to eat, and left off eating in order to talk; she was never still, and was active as a squirrel, in spite of her *embonpoint* and her short legs; her laugh, which was a torrent of shrill cries, resounded here and there, ceaselessly, in a bedroom, in the loft, in the café, everywhere, and all about nothing.

The two women on the ground floor, Louise, who was nicknamed La Cocotte, and Flora, whom they called Balançoise, because she limped a little, the former always dressed as the Goddess of Liberty, with a tri-colored sash, and the other as a Spanish woman, with a string of copper coins in her carroty hair, which jingled at every uneven step, looked like cooks dressed up for the carnival. They were like all other women of the lower orders, neither uglier nor better looking than they usually are.

They looked just like servants at an inn, and were generally called "the two pumps."

A jealous peace, which was, however, very rarely disturbed, reigned among these five women, thanks to Madame Tellier's conciliatory wisdom, and to her constant good humor, and the establishment, which

was the only one of the kind in the little town, was very much frequented. Madame Tellier had succeeded in giving it such a respectable appearance, she was so amiable and obliging to everybody, her good heart was so well known, that she was treated with a certain amount of consideration. The regular customers spent money on her, and were delighted when she was especially friendly toward them, and when they met during the day, they would say: "Until this evening, you know where," just as men say: "At the club, after dinner." In a word Madame Tellier's house was somewhere to go and they very rarely missed their daily meetings there.

One evening toward the end of May, the first arrival, Monsieur Poulin, who was a timber merchant, and had been mayor, found the door shut. The lantern behind the grating was not alight; there was not a sound in the house; everything seemed dead. He knocked, gently at first, then more loudly, but nobody answered the door. Then he went slowly up the street, and when he got to the marketplace, he met Monsieur Duvert, the gunmaker, who was going to the same place, so they went back together, but did not meet with any better success. But suddenly they heard a loud noise, close to them, and on going round the house, they saw a number of English and French sailors, who were hammering at the closed shutters of the tap-room with their fists.

The two tradesmen immediately made their escape, but a low "Pst!" stopped them; it was Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who had recognized them, and was trying to attract their attention. They told him what had happened, and he was all the more annoyed, as he was a married man and father

of a family, and only went on Saturdays. That was his regular evening, and now he should be deprived of this dissipation for the whole week.

The three men went as far as the quay together, and on the way they met young Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, who frequented the place regularly, and Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector; and they all returned to the Rue aux Juifs together, to make a last attempt. But the exasperated sailors were besieging the house, throwing stones at the shutters, and shouting, and the five first-floor customers went away as quickly as possible, and walked aimlessly about the streets.

Presently they met Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and then Monsieur Vasse, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and they took a long walk, going to the pier first of all, where they sat down in a row on the granite parapet and watched the rising tide, and when the promenaders had sat there for some time, Monsieur Tournevau said:

"This is not very amusing!"

"Decidedly not," Monsieur Pinipesse replied, and they started off to walk again.

After going through the street alongside the hill, they returned over the wooden bridge which crosses the Retenue, passed close to the railway, and came out again into the marketplace, when, suddenly, a quarrel arose between Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector, and Monsieur Tournevau about an edible mushroom which one of them declared he had found in the neighborhood.

As they were out of temper already from having nothing to do, they would very probably have come to blows, if the others had not interfered. Monsieur

Pinipesse went off furious, and soon another altercation arose between the ex-major, Monsieur Poulin, and Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, on the subject of the tax collector's salary and the profits which he might make. Insulting remarks were freely passing between them, when a torrent of formidable cries was heard, and the body of sailors, who were tired of waiting so long outside a closed house, came into the square. They were walking arm in arm, two and two, and formed a long procession, and were shouting furiously. The townsmen hid themselves in a doorway, and the yelling crew disappeared in the direction of the abbey. For a long time they still heard the noise, which diminished like a storm in the distance, and then silence was restored. Monsieur Poulin and Monsieur Dupuis, who were angry with each other, went in different directions, without wishing each other good-by.

The other four set off again, and instinctively went in the direction of Madame Tellier's establishment, which was still closed, silent, impenetrable. A quiet but obstinate drunken man was knocking at the door of the lower room, and then stopped and called Frederic, in a low voice, but finding that he got no answer, he sat down on the doorstep, and waited the course of events.

The others were just going to retire, when the noisy band of sailors reappeared at the end of the street. The French sailors were shouting the "Marseillaise," and the Englishmen "Rule Britannia." There was a general lurching against the wall, and then the drunken fellows went on their way toward the quay, where a fight broke out between the two nations, in the course of which an Englishman

had his arm broken, and a Frenchman his nose split.

The drunken man who had waited outside the door was crying by that time, as drunken men and chilren cry when they are vexed, and the others went away. By degrees, calm was restored in the noisy town; here and there, at moments, the distant sound of voices could be heard, and then died away in the distance.

One man only was still wandering about, Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who was annoyed at having to wait until the following Saturday, and he hoped something would turn up, he did not know what; but he was exasperated at the police for thus allowing an establishment of such public utility, which they had under their control, to be closed.

He went back to it and examined the walls, trying to find out some reason, and on the shutter he saw a notice stuck up. He struck a wax match and read the following, in a large, uneven hand: "Closed on account of the Confirmation."

Then he went away, as he saw it was useless to remain, and left the drunken man lying on the pavement fast asleep, outside that inhospitable door.

The next day, all the regular customers, one after the other, found some reason for going through the street, with a bundle of papers under their arm to keep them in countenance, and with a furtive glance they all read that mysterious notice:

"*Closed on account of the Confirmation.*"

## PART II

Madame Tellier had a brother, who was a carpenter in their native place, Virville, in the Department of Eure. When she still kept the inn at Yvetot, she had stood godmother to that brother's daughter, who had received the name of Constance, Constance Rivet; she herself being a Rivet on her father's side. The carpenter, who knew that his sister was in a good position, did not lose sight of her, although they did not meet often, for they were both kept at home by their occupations, and lived a long way from each other. But as the girl was twelve years old, and going to be confirmed, he seized that opportunity to write to his sister, asking her to come and be present at the ceremony. Their old parents were dead, and as she could not well refuse her goddaughter she accepted the invitation. Her brother, whose name was Joseph, hoped that by dint of showing his sister attention, she might be induced to make her will in the girl's favor, as she had no children of her own.

His sister's occupation did not trouble his scruples in the least, and, besides, nobody knew anything about it at Virville. When they spoke of her, they only said: "Madame Tellier is living at Fécamp," which might mean that she was living on her own private income. It was quite twenty leagues from Fécamp to Virville, and for a peasant, twenty leagues on land is as long a journey as crossing the ocean would be to city people. The people at Virville had never been further than Rouen, and nothing attracted the people from Fécamp to a village of five hundred houses in the middle of a plain, and

situated in another department; at any rate, nothing was known about her business.

But the Confirmation was coming on, and Madame Tellier was in great embarrassment. She had no substitute, and did not at all care to leave her house, even for a day; for all the rivalries between the girls upstairs and those downstairs would infallibly break out. No doubt Frederic would get drunk, and when he was in that state, he would knock anybody down for a mere word. At last, however, she made up her mind to take them all with her, with the exception of the man, to whom she gave a holiday until the next day but one.

When she asked her brother, he made no objection, but undertook to put them all up for a night, and so on Saturday morning the eight-o'clock express carried off Madame Tellier and her companions in a second-class carriage. As far as Beuzeille they were alone, and chattered like magpies, but at that station a couple got in. The man, an old peasant, dressed in a blue blouse with a turned-down collar, wide sleeves tight at the wrist, ornamented with white embroidery, wearing an old high hat with long nap, held an enormous green umbrella in one hand, and a large basket in the other, from which the heads of three frightened ducks protruded. The woman, who sat up stiffly in her rustic finery, had a face like a fowl, with a nose that was as pointed as a bill. She sat down opposite her husband and did not stir, as she was startled at finding herself in such smart company.

There was certainly an array of striking colors in the carriage. Madame Tellier was dressed in blue silk from head to foot, and had on a dazzling red imitation French cashmere shawl. Fernande was

puffing in a Scotch plaid dress, of which her companions had laced the bodice as tight as they could, forcing up her full bust, that was continually heaving up and down. Raphaele, with a bonnet covered with feathers, so that it looked like a bird's nest, had on a lilac dress with gold spots on it, and there was something Oriental about it that suited her Jewish face. Rosa had on a pink petticoat with large flounces, and looked like a very fat child, an obese dwarf; whilst the two Pumps looked as if they had cut their dresses out of old flowered curtains dating from the Restoration.

As soon as they were no longer alone in the compartment, the ladies put on staid looks, and began to talk of subjects which might give others a high opinion of them. But at Bolbeck a gentleman with light whiskers, a gold chain, and wearing two or three rings, got in, and put several parcels wrapped in oilcloth on the rack over his head. He looked inclined for a joke, and seemed a good-hearted fellow.

"Are you ladies changing your quarters?" he said, and that question embarrassed them all considerably. Madame Tellier, however, quickly regained her composure, and said sharply, to avenge the honor of her corps:

"I think you might try to be polite!"

He excused himself, and said: "I beg your pardon, I ought to have said your nunnery."

She could not think of a retort, or perhaps thinking she had said enough, Madame gave him a dignified bow, and compressed her lips.

Then the gentleman, who was sitting between Rose and the old peasant, began to wink knowingly at the ducks whose heads were sticking out of the basket, and when he felt that he had fixed the atten-

tion of his public, he began to tickle them under the bills, and spoke funnily to them, to make the company smile.

"We have left our little pond, quack! quack! to make the acquaintance of the little spit, qu-ack! qu-ack!"

The unfortunate creatures turned their necks away, to avoid his caresses, and made desperate efforts to get out of their wicker prison, and then, suddenly, all at once, uttered the most lamentable quacks of distress. The women exploded with laughter. They leant forward and pushed each other, so as to see better; they were very much interested in the ducks, and the gentleman redoubled his airs, his wit, and his teazing.

Rosa joined in, and leaning over her neighbor's legs, she kissed the three animals on the head, and immediately all the girls wanted to kiss them in turn, and as they did so the gentleman took them on his knee, jumped them up and down and pinched their arms. The two peasants, who were even in greater consternation than their poultry, rolled their eyes as if they were possessed, without venturing to move, and their old wrinkled faces had not a smile, not a twitch.

Then the gentleman, who was a commercial traveler, offered the ladies suspenders by way of a joke, and taking up one of his packages, he opened it. It was a joke, for the parcel contained garters. There were blue silk, pink silk, red silk, violet silk, mauve silk garters, and the buckles were made of two gilt metal Cupids, embracing each other. The girls uttered exclamations of delight and looked at them with that gravity natural to all women when they are considering an article of dress. They consulted

one another by their looks or in a whisper, and replied in the same manner, and Madame Tellier was longingly handling a pair of orange garters that were broader and more imposing looking than the rest; really fit for the mistress of such an establishment.

The gentleman waited, for he had an idea.

"Come, my kittens," he said, "you must try them on."

There was a torrent of exclamations, and they squeezed their petticoats between their legs, but he quietly waited his time, and said: "Well, if you will not try them on I shall pack them up again."

And he added cunningly: "I offer any pair they like to those who will try them on."

But they would not, and sat up very straight, and looked dignified.

But the two Pumps looked so distressed that he renewed his offer to them, and Flora especially visibly hesitated, and he insisted: "Come, my dear, a little courage! Just look at that lilac pair; it will suit your dress, admirably——"

That decided her, and pulling up her dress she showed a thick leg fit for a milkmaid, in a badly fitting, coarse stocking. The commercial traveler stooped down and fastened the garter. When he had done this, he gave her the lilac pair, and asked: "Who next?"

"I! I!" they all shouted at once, and he began on Rosa, who uncovered a shapeless, round thing without any ankle, a regular "sausage of a leg," as Raphaele used to say.

Lastly, Madame Tellier herself put out her leg, a handsome, muscular, Norman leg, and in his surprise and pleasure, the commercial traveler gallantly took

off his hat to salute that master calf, like a true French cavalier.

The two peasants, who were speechless from surprise, glanced sideways out of the corner of one eye, and they looked so exactly like fowls that the man with the light whiskers, when he sat up, said "Co—co—ri—co," under their very noses, and that gave rise to another storm of amusement.

The old people got out at Motteville, with their basket, their ducks, and their umbrella, and they heard the woman say to her husband, as they went away:

"They are no good, and are off to that cursed place, Paris."

The funny commercial traveler himself got out at Rouen, after behaving so coarsely that Madame Tellier was obliged sharply to put him in his right place, and she added, as a moral: "This will teach us not to talk to the first comer."

At Oissel they changed trains, and at a little station further on, Monsieur Joseph Rivet was waiting for them with a large cart with a number of chairs in it, drawn by a white horse.

The carpenter politely kissed all the ladies, and then helped them into his conveyance.

Three of them sat on three chairs at the back, Raphaele, Madame Tellier and her brother on the three chairs in front, while Rosa, who had no seat, settled herself as comfortably as she could on tall Fernande's knees, and then they set off.

But the horse's jerky trot shook the cart so terribly that the chairs began to dance, and threw the travelers about, to the right and to the left, as if they were dancing puppets, which made them scream and make horrible grimaces.

They clung on to the sides of the vehicle, their bonnets fell on their backs, over their faces and on their shoulders, and the white horse went on stretching out his head, and holding out his little hairless tail, like a rat's, with which he whisked his buttocks from time to time.

Joseph Rivet, with one leg on the shaft and the other doubled under him, held the reins with his elbows very high, and kept uttering a kind of clucking sound, which made the horse prick up its ears and go faster.

The green country extended on either side of the road, and here and there the colza in flower presented a waving expanse of yellow, from which arose a strong, wholesome, sweet and penetrating odor, which the wind carried to some distance.

The cornflowers showed their little blue heads amid the rye, and the women wanted to pick them, but Monsieur Rivet refused to stop.

Then, sometimes, a whole field appeared to be covered with blood, so thick were the poppies, and the cart, which looked as if it were filled with flowers of more brilliant hue, jogged on through fields colored with wild flowers, and disappeared behind the trees of a farm, only to reappear and to go on again through the yellow or green standing crops, which were studded with red or blue.

One o'clock struck as they drove up to the carpenter's door. They were tired out, and pale with hunger, as they had eaten nothing since they left home. Madame Rivet ran out, and made them alight, one after another, and kissed them as soon as they were on the ground, and she seemed as if she would never tire of kissing her sister-in-law, whom she apparently wanted to monopolize. They had

lunch in the workshop, which had been cleared out for the next day's dinner.

The capital omelette, followed by boiled chitterlings and washed down with good hard cider, made them all feel comfortable.

Rivet had taken a glass so that he might drink with them, and his wife cooked, waited on them, brought in the dishes, took them out, and asked each of them in a whisper whether they had everything they wanted. A number of boards standing against the walls and heaps of shavings that had been swept into the corners gave out a smell of planed wood, a smell of a carpenter's shop, that resinous odor which penetrates to the lungs.

They wanted to see the little girl, but she had gone to church, and would not be back again until evening, so they all went out for a stroll in the country.

It was a small village, through which the high-road passed. Ten or a dozen houses on either side of the single street were inhabited by the butcher, the grocer, the carpenter, the innkeeper, the shoemaker and the baker.

The church was at the end of the street, and was surrounded by a small churchyard; and four immense lime-trees, which stood just outside the porch, shaded it completely. It was built of flint, in no particular style, and had a slate-roofed steeple. When you got past it, you were again in the open country, which was varied here and there by clumps of trees which hid the homestead.

Rivet had given his arm to his sister, out of politeness, although he was in his working clothes, and was walking with her in a dignified manner. His wife, who was overwhelmed by Raphaele's gold-

striped dress, walked between her and Fernande, and roly-poly Rosa was trotting behind with Louise and Flora, the Seesaw, who was limping along, quite tired out.

The inhabitants came to their doors, the children left off playing, and a window curtain would be raised, so as to show a muslin cap, while an old woman with a crutch, who was almost blind, crossed herself as if it were a religious procession, and they all gazed for a long time at those handsome ladies from town, who had come so far to be present at the confirmation of Joseph Rivet's little girl, and the carpenter rose very much in the public estimation.

As they passed the church, they heard some children singing; little shrill voices were singing a hymn, but Madame Tellier would not let them go in, for fear of disturbing the little cherubs.

After a walk, during which Joseph Rivet enumerated the principal landed proprietors, spoke about the yield of the land and the productiveness of the cows and sheep, he took his tribe of women home and installed them in his house, and as it was very small, they had to put them into the rooms, two and two.

Just for once, Rivet would sleep in the workshop on the shavings; his wife was to share her bed with her sister-in-law, and Fernande and Raphaele were to sleep together in the next room. Louise and Flora were put into the kitchen, where they had a mattress on the floor, and Rosa had a little dark cupboard to herself at the top of the stairs, close to the loft, where the candidate for confirmation was to sleep.

When the little girl came in, she was overwhelmed with kisses; all the women wished to caress

her, with that need of tender expansion, that habit of professional affection, which had made them kiss the ducks in the railway carriage.

They each of them took her on their knees, stroked her soft, light hair, and pressed her in their arms with vehement and spontaneous outbursts of affection, and the child, who was very good and religious, bore it all patiently.

As the day had been a fatiguing one for everybody, they all went to bed soon after dinner. The whole village was wrapped in that perfect stillness of the country, which is almost like a religious silence, and the girls, who were accustomed to the noisy evenings of their establishment, felt rather impressed by the perfect repose of the sleeping village, and they shivered, not with cold, but with those little shivers of loneliness which come over uneasy and troubled hearts.

As soon as they were in bed, two and two together, they clasped each other in their arms, as if to protect themselves against this feeling of the calm and profound slumber of the earth. But Rosa, who was alone in her little dark cupboard, felt a vague and painful emotion come over her.

She was tossing about in bed, unable to get to sleep, when she heard the faint sobs of a crying child close to her head, through the partition. She was frightened, and called out, and was answered by a weak voice, broken by sobs. It was the little girl, who was always used to sleeping in her mother's room, and who was afraid in her small attic.

Rosa was delighted, got up softly so as not to awaken any one, and went and fetched the child. She took her into her warm bed, kissed her and pressed her to her bosom, lavished exaggerated manifesta-

tions of tenderness on her, and at last grew calmer herself and went to sleep. And till morning, the candidate for confirmation slept with her head on Rosa's bosom.

At five o'clock the little church bell, ringing the Angelus, woke the women, who usually slept the whole morning long.

The villagers were up already, and the women went busily from house to house, carefully bringing short, starched muslin dresses or very long wax tapers, tied in the middle with a bow of silk fringed with gold, and with dents in the wax for the fingers.

The sun was already high in the blue sky, which still had a rosy tint toward the horizon, like a faint remaining trace of dawn. Families of fowls were walking about outside the houses, and here and there a black cock, with a glistening breast, raised his head, which was crowned by his red comb, flapped his wings, and uttered his shrill crow, which the other cocks repeated.

Vehicles of all sorts came from neighboring parishes, stopping at the different houses, and tall Norman women dismounted, wearing dark dresses, with neck-handkerchiefs crossed over the bosom, fastened with silver brooches, a hundred years old.

The men had put on their blue smocks over their new frock-coats, or over their old dress-coats of green cloth, the two tails of which hung down below their blouses. When the horses were in the stable, there was a double line of rustic conveyances along the road; carts, cabriolets, tilburies, wagonettes, traps of every shape and age, tipping forward on their shafts, or else tipping backward with the shafts up in the air.

The carpenter's house was as busy as a bee-hive.

The women, in dressing-jackets and petticoats, with their thin, short hair, which looked faded and worn, hanging down their backs, were busy dressing the child, who was standing quietly on a table, while Madame Tellier was directing the movements of her battalion. They washed her, did her hair, dressed her, and with the help of a number of pins, they arranged the folds of her dress, and took in the waist, which was too large.

Then, when she was ready, she was told to sit down and not to move, and the women hurried off to get ready themselves.

The church bell began to ring again, and its tinkle was lost in the air, like a feeble voice which is soon drowned in space. The candidates came out of the houses, and went toward the parochial building, which contained the two schools and the mansion house, and which stood quite at one end of the village, while the church was situated at the other.

The parents, in their very best clothes, followed their children, with embarrassed looks, and those clumsy movements of a body bent by toil.

The little girls disappeared in a cloud of muslin, which looked like whipped cream, while the lads, who looked like embryo waiters in a café, and whose heads shone with pomatum, walked with ther legs apart, so as not to get any dust or dirt on their black trousers.

It was something for a family to be proud of, when a large number of relatives, who had come from a distance, surrounded the child, and the carpenter's triumph was complete.

Madame Tellier's regiment, with its leader at its head, followed Constance; her father gave his arm to his sister, her mother walked by the side of Ra-

phaele, Fernande with Rosa, and Louise and Flora together, and thus they proceeded majestically through the village, like a general's staff in full uniform, while the effect on the village was startling.

At the school, the girls ranged themselves under the Sister of Mercy, and the boys under the schoolmaster, and they started off, singing a hymn as they went. The boys led the way, in two files, between the two rows of vehicles, from which the horses had been taken out, and the girls followed in the same order; and as all the people in the village had given the town ladies the precedence out of politeness, they came immediately behind the girls, and lengthened the double line of the procession still more, three on the right and three on the left, while their dresses were as striking as a display of fireworks.

When they went into the church, the congregation grew quite excited. They pressed against each other, turned round, and jostled one another in order to see, and some of the devout ones spoke almost aloud, for they were so astonished at the sight of those ladies whose dresses were more elaborate than the priest's vestments.

The mayor offered them his pew, the first one on the right, close to the choir, and Madame Tellier sat there with her sister-in-law, Fernande and Raphaele. Rosa, Louise and Flora occupied the second seat, in company with the carpenter.

The choir was full of kneeling children, the girls on one side and the boys on the other, and the long wax tapers which they held looked like lances pointing in all directions, and three men were standing in front of the lectern, singing as loud as they could.

They prolonged the syllables of the sonorous Latin indefinitely, holding on to " Amens" with in-

terminable "a—a's," which the reed stop of the organ sustained in a monotonous, long-drawn-out tone.

A child's shrill voice took up the reply, and from time to time a priest sitting in a stall and wearing a biretta got up, muttered something, and sat down again, while the three singers continued, their eyes fixed on the big book of plain chants lying open before them on the outstretched wings of a wooden eagle.

Then silence ensued, and the service went on. Toward the close, Rosa, with her head in both hands, suddenly thought of her mother, her village church, and her first communion. She almost fancied that that day had returned, when she was so small and was almost hidden in her white dress, and she began to cry.

First of all she wept silently, and the tears dropped slowly from her eyes, but her emotion increased with her recollections, and she began to sob. She took out her pocket-handkerchief, wiped her eyes, and held it to her mouth, so as not to scream, but it was in vain. A sort of rattle escaped her throat, and she was answered by two other profound, heart-breaking sobs; for her two neighbors, Louise and Flora, who were kneeling near her, overcome by similar recollections, were sobbing by her side, amid a flood of tears; and as tears are contagious, Madame Tellier soon in turn found that her eyes were wet, and on turning to her sister-in-law, she saw that all the occupants of her seat were also crying.

Soon, throughout the church, here and there, a wife, a mother, a sister, seized by the strange sympathy of poignant emotion, and affected at the sight

of those handsome ladies on their knees, shaken with sobs, was moistening her cambric pocket-handkerchief, and pressing her beating heart with her left hand.

Just as the sparks from an engine will set fire to dry grass, so the tears of Rosa and of her companions infected the whole congregation in a moment. Men, women, old men, and lads in new smocks were soon all sobbing, and something superhuman seemed to be hovering over their heads—a spirit, the powerful breath of an invisible and all-powerful being.

Suddenly a species of madness seemed to pervade the church, the noise of a crowd in a state of frenzy, a tempest of sobs and stifled cries. It came like gusts of wind which blow the trees in a forest, and the priest, paralyzed by emotion, stammered out incoherent prayers, without finding words, ardent prayers of the soul soaring to heaven.

The people behind him gradually grew calmer. The cantors, in all the dignity of their white surplices, went on in somewhat uncertain voices, and the reed stop itself seemed hoarse, as if the instrument had been weeping; the priest, however, raised his hand to command silence, and went and stood on the chancel steps, when everybody was silent.

After a few remarks on what had just taken place, and which he attributed to a miracle, he continued, turning to the seats where the carpenter's guests were sitting:

"I especially thank you, my dear sisters, who have come from such a distance, and whose presence among us, whose evident faith and ardent piety have set such a salutary example to all. You have edified my parish; your emotion has warmed all

hearts; without you, this great day would not, perhaps, have had this really divine character. It is sufficient, at times, that there should be one chosen lamb, for the Lord to descend on his flock."

His voice failed him again, from emotion, and he said no more, but concluded the service.

They now all left the church as quickly as possible; the children themselves were restless and tired with such a prolonged tension of the mind. The parents left the church by degrees, to see about dinner.

There was a crowd outside, a noisy crowd, a babel of loud voices, where the shrill Norman accent was discernible. The villagers formed two ranks, and when the children appeared, each family took possession of their own.

The whole houseful of women caught hold of Constance, surrounded her and kissed her, and Rosa was especially demonstrative. At last she took hold of one hand, while Madame Tellier took the other, and Raphaele and Fernande held up her long muslin skirt, so that it might not drag in the dust; Louise and Flora brought up the rear with Madame Rivet; and the child, who was very silent and thoughtful, set off for home, in the midst of this guard of honor.

Dinner was served in the workshop, on long boards supported by trestles, and through the open door they could see all the enjoyment that was going on in the village. Everywhere they were feasting, and through every window were to be seen tables surrounded by people in their Sunday best, and a cheerful noise was heard in every house, while the men sat in their shirt-sleeves, drinking glass after glass of cider.

In the carpenter's house the gaiety maintained somewhat of an air of reserve, the consequence of the emotion of the girls in the morning, and Rivet was the only one who was in a jolly mood, and he was drinking to excess. Madame Tellier looked at the clock every moment, for, in order not to lose two days running, they must take the 3:55 train, which would bring them to Fécamp by dark.

The carpenter tried very hard to distract her attention, so as to keep his guests until the next day, but he did not succeed, for she never joked when there was business on hand, and as soon as they had had their coffee she ordered her girls to make haste and get ready, and then, turning to her brother, she said:

"You must put in the horse immediately," and she herself went to finish her last preparations.

When she came down again, her sister-in-law was waiting to speak to her about the child, and a long conversation took place, in which, however, nothing was settled. The carpenter's wife was artful, and pretended to be very much affected, and Madame Tellier, who was holding the girl on her knee, would not pledge herself to anything definite, but merely gave vague promises—she would not forget her, there was plenty of time, and besides, they would meet again.

But the conveyance did not come to the door, and the women did not come downstairs. Upstairs, they even heard loud laughter, romping, little screams, and much clapping of hands, and so, while the carpenter's wife went to the stable to see whether the cart was ready, Madame went upstairs."

Rivet, who was very drunk, was plaguing Rosa,

who was half choking with laughter. Louise and Flora were holding him by the arms and trying to calm him, as they were shocked at his levity after that morning's ceremony; but Raphaele and Fernande were urging him on, writhing and holding their sides with laughter, and they uttered shrill cries at every rebuff the drunken fellow received.

The man was furious, his face was red, and he was trying to shake off the two women who were clinging to him, while he was pulling Rosa's skirt with all his might, and stammering incoherently.

But Madame Tellier, who was very indignant, went up to her brother, seized him by the shoulders, and threw him out of the room with such violence that he fell against the wall in the passage, and a minute afterward, they heard him pumping water on his head in the yard, and when he reappeared with the cart, he was quite calm.

They started off in the same way as they had come the day before, and the little white horse went along with his quick, dancing trot. Under the hot sun, their fun, which had been checked during dinner, broke out again. The girls now were amused at the jolting of the cart, pushed their neighbors' chairs, and burst out laughing every moment.

There was a glare of light over the country, which dazzled their eyes, and the wheels raised two trails of dust along the highroad. Presently, Fernande, who was fond of music, asked Rosa to sing something, and she boldly struck up the *Gros Curé de Meudon,* but Madame Tellier made her stop immediately, as she thought it a very unsuitable song for such a day, and she added:

"Sing us something of Béranger's." And so, after a moment's hesitation, Rosa began Béranger's song *The Grandmother* in her worn-out voice, and all the girls, and even Madame Tellier herself, joined in the chorus:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My nimble legs,
And vanished charms."

"That is first-rate," Rivet declared, carried away by the rhythm, and they shouted the refrain to every verse, while Rivet beat time on the shaft with his foot, and with the reins on the back of the horse, who, as if he himself were carried away by the rhythm, broke into a wild gallop, and threw all the women in a heap, one on top of the other, on the bottom of the conveyance.

They got up, laughing as if they were mad, and the song went on, shouted at the top of their voices, beneath the burning sky, among the ripening grain, to the rapid gallop of the little horse, who set off every time the refrain was sung, and galloped a hundred yards, to their great delight, while occasionally a stone-breaker by the roadside sat up and looked at the load of shouting females through his wire spectacles.

When they got out at the station, the carpenter said:

"I am sorry you are going; we might have had some good times together." But Madame Tellier replied very sensibly: "Everything has its right time, and we cannot always be enjoying ourselves." And then he had a sudden inspiration:

"Look here, I will come and see you at Fécamp next month." And he gave Rosa a roguish and knowing look.

"Come," his sister replied, "you must be sensible; you may come if you like, but you are not to be up to any of your tricks."

He did not reply, and as they heard the whistle of the train, he immediately began to kiss them all. When it came to Rosa's turn, he tried to get to her mouth, which she, however, smiling with her lips closed, turned away from him each time by a rapid movement of her head to one side. He held her in his arms, but he could not attain his object, as his large whip, which he was holding in his hand and waving behind the girl's back in desperation, interfered with his efforts.

"Passengers for Rouen, take your seats!" a guard cried, and they got in. There was a slight whistle, followed by a loud whistle from the engine, which noisily puffed out its first jet of steam, while the wheels began to turn a little with a visible effort, and Rivet left the station and ran along by the track to get another look at Rosa, and as the carriage passed him, he began to crack his whip and to jump, while he sang at the top of his voice:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My nimble legs,
And vanished charms!"

And then he watched a white pocket-handkerchief, which somebody was waving, as it disappeared in the distance.

## PART III

They slept the peaceful sleep of a quiet conscience, until they got to Rouen, and when they returned to the house, refreshed and rested, Madame Tellier could not help saying:

"It was all very well, but I was longing to get home."

They hurried over their supper, and then, when they had put on their usual evening costume, waited for their regular customers, and the little colored lamp outside the door told the passers-by that Madame Tellier had returned, and in a moment the news spread, nobody knew how or through whom.

Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, even carried his forgetfulness so far as to send a special messenger to Monsieur Tournevau, who was in the bosom of his family.

The fish-curer had several cousins to dinner every Sunday, and they were having coffee, when a man came in with a letter in his hand. Monsieur Tournevau was much excited; he opened the envelope and grew pale; it contained only these words in pencil:

"The cargo of cod has been found; the ship has come into port; good business for you. Come immediately."

He felt in his pockets, gave the messenger twopence, and suddenly blushing to his ears, he said: "I must go out." He handed his wife the laconic and mysterious note, rang the bell, and when the servant came in, he asked her to bring him his hat and overcoat immediately. As soon as he was in the street, he began to hurry, and the way seemed

to him to be twice as long as usual, in consequence of his impatience.

Madame Tellier's establishment had put on quite a holiday look. On the ground floor, a number of sailors were making a deafening noise, and Louise and Flora drank with one and the other, and were being called for in every direction at once.

The upstairs room was full by nine o'clock. Monsieur Vasse, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, Madame Tellier's regular but Platonic wooer, was talking to her in a corner in a low voice, and they were both smiling, as if they were about to come to an understanding.

Monsieur Poulin, the ex-mayor, was talking to Rosa, and she was running her hands through the old gentleman's white whiskers.

Tall Fernande was on the sofa, her feet on Monsieur Pinipesse the tax collector's coat, and her back against young Monsieur Philippe; her right arm was around his neck, while she held a cigarette in her left.

Raphaele appeared to be talking seriously with Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and she finished by saying: "Yes, I will, yes."

Just then, the door opened suddenly, and Monsieur Tournevau came in, and was greeted with enthusiastic cries of: "Long live Tournevau!" And Raphaele, who was dancing alone up and down the room, went and threw herself into his arms. He seized her in a vigorous embrace and, without saying a word, lifted her up as if she had been a feather.

Rosa was chatting to the ex-mayor, kissing him and pulling both his whiskers at the same time in order to keep his head straight.

Fernande and Madame Tellier remained with the

four men, and Monsieur Philippe exclaimed: "I will pay for some champagne; get three bottles, Madame Tellier." And Fernande gave him a hug, and whispered to him: "Play us a waltz, will you?" So he rose and sat down at the old piano in the corner, and managed to get a hoarse waltz out of the depths of the instrument.

The tall girl put her arms around the tax collector, Madame Tellier let Monsieur Vasse take her round the waist, and the two couples turned round, kissing as they danced. Monsieur Vasse, who had formerly danced in good society, waltzed with such elegance that Madame Tellier was quite captivated.

Frederic brought the champagne; the first cork popped, and Monsieur Philippe played the introduction to a quadrille, through which the four dancers walked in society fashion, decorously, with propriety, deportment, bows and curtsies, and then they began to drink.

Monsieur Philippe next struck up a lively polka, and Monsieur Tournevau started off with the handsome Jewess, whom he held without letting her feet touch the ground. Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Vasse had started off with renewed vigor, and from time to time one or other couple would stop to toss off a long draught of sparkling wine, and that dance was threatening to become never-ending, when Rosa opened the door.

"I want to dance," she exclaimed. And she caught hold of Monsieur Dupuis, who was sitting idle on the couch, and the dance began again.

But the bottles were empty. "I will pay for one," Monsieur Tournevau said. "So will I," Monsieur Vasse declared. "And I will do the same," Monsieur Dupuis remarked.

They all began to clap their hands, and it soon became a regular ball, and from time to time Louise and Flora ran upstairs quickly and had a few turns, while their customers downstairs grew impatient, and then they returned regretfully to the tap-room. At midnight they were still dancing.

Madame Tellier let them amuse themselves while she had long private talks in corners with Monsieur Vasse, as if to settle the last details of something that had already been settled.

At last, at one o'clock, the two married men, Monsieur Tournevau and Monsieur Pinipesse, declared that they were going home, and wanted to pay. Nothing was charged for except the champagne, and that only cost six francs a bottle, instead of ten, which was the usual price, and when they expressed their surprise at such generosity, Madame Tellier, who was beaming, said to them:

"We don't have a holiday every day."

# THE HERMIT

WE had gone with some friends to see the old hermit who dwelt in the midst of tall trees on an ancient mound in the vast plain that extends from Cannes to La Napoule.

On the way home, we talked of those strange lay recluses, numerous in former times, but now a vanished race. We sought to divine the moral causes, and to determine the nature of the griefs, which, in bygone days, had driven men to dwell in wastes.

All of a sudden, one of our companions said:

"I have known two hermits—a man and a woman. The woman must be living still. She dwelt, five years ago, in some deserted ruins on a mountain top on the coast of Corsica, fifteen or twenty kilometres away from any habitation. She lived there with a maid-servant. I went to see her. She had

certainly been a distinguished woman of the world. She received me with politeness and even in a gracious manner, but I knew nothing about her, and could find out nothing.

" As for the man, I am going to relate to you his ill-omened adventure:

" Look round! You see over there that peaked woody mountain which stands by itself behind La Napoule in front of the summits of the Esterel; it is called in the district Snake Mountain. There is where my hermit lived, within the walls of a little ancient temple, about a dozen years ago.

" Having heard about him, I resolved to make his acquaintance, and set out for Cannes on horseback one March morning. Leaving my mount at the inn at La Napoule, I commenced to climb that singular mountain, about one hundred and fifty or two hundred metres in height, and covered with aromatic plants, especially cysti, whose odor is so sharp and penetrating that it irritates you and causes you discomfort. The soil is stony, and one sees gliding over the pebbles long adders which disappear in the grass. Hence the well-deserved appellation of Snake Mountain. On certain days the reptiles seem to spring into existence under your feet as you climb the declivity beneath the rays of the sun. They are so numerous that you no longer venture to go forward, and experience a strange sense of uneasiness, not fear, for these creatures are harmless, but a sort of mysterious terror. I had several times the peculiar sensation of climbing a sacred mountain of antiquity, a fragrant hill full of mystery, covered with cysti and inhabited by serpents, its summit crowned with a temple.

" This temple still exists. They told me, at least,

that it was a temple; for I did not seek to know more about it so as not to destroy the illusion.

" So, one March morning, I climbed up there under pretext of admiring the country. On reaching the top, I perceived walls, and a man sitting on a stone. He was scarcely more than forty years of age, though his hair was quite white; but his beard was almost black. He was fondling a cat which had cuddled itself up on his knees, and did not seem to mind me. I took a walk round the ruins, one portion of which, covered over and inclosed by branches, straw, grass and stones, was inhabited by him, and I made my way toward that spot.

" The view here is splendid. On the right is the Esterel with its peaked summit strangely sculptured by nature, then the boundless sea stretching as far as the distant coast of Italy with its numerous capes. It faces Cannes, with the Lerins Islands, green and flat, which look as if they were floating, the last of which, in the direction of the open sea, is an old castellated fortress, with battlemented towers, rising out of the very waves.

" Then, above the green mountain side where you can see what, at a distance, look like innumerable eggs laid on the edge of the shore, the long chaplet of villas and white villages built among the trees, rise the Alps, their summits still shrouded in a hood of snow.

" I murmured:

" ' Great heaven, this is beautiful! '

" The man raised his head, and said:

" ' Yes, but when you see it every day, it is monotonous.'

" Then he talked, chatted, wearied himself with talking—my hermit. I detained him.

" I did not tarry long that day; I was only endeavoring to ascertain the color of his misanthropy. The particular impression he gave out was that of being bored with other people, weary of everything, hopelessly disillusioned and disgusted with himself as well as the rest of the world.

" I left him after a half-hour's conversation, but returned eight days later, and once again the following week, then every week, so that in two months we were friends.

" Well, one evening at the close of May, I decided that the favorable moment had arrived, and I took some provisions in order to dine with him on Snake Mountain.

" It was one of those fragrant evenings of the South where flowers are cultivated just as wheat is in the North, in that country where every essence that perfumes the flesh and the garments of women is manufactured, one of those evenings when the breath of the innumerable orange-trees with which the gardens and all the valleys are planted overpowers one with a languor that might make old men dream of love.

" My hermit received me with manifest pleasure. He willingly consented to share my dinner.

" I made him drink a little wine, which he had not tasted for a long time. He brightened up and began to talk about his past life. He had always resided in Paris, and had, it seemed to me, lived a gay bachelor's life.

" I asked him abruptly:

" ' What put into your head this funny notion of going to live on the top of a mountain? '

" He answered immediately:

" ' Ah! it was because I received the most ter-

rible shock that a man can experience. But why hide from you this, my misfortune? It will make you pity me perhaps! And then—I have never told any one—never—and I would like to know for once what another thinks of it, and how he would judge me.

" ' Born and brought up in Paris, I grew to manhood and spent my life in that city. My parents had left me an income of several thousand francs a year, and through influence, I obtained a quiet, easy position which made me rich, for a bachelor.

" ' I had, since my youth, led a bachelor's life. You know what that is. Free and without family, resloved not to take a legitimate wife, I passed at one time three months with one, at another time six months with another, then a year without a companion, taking as my prey the mass of women who are either to be bought or had for the asking.

" ' This humdrum, frivolous existence agreed with me, satisfied my natural taste for change and irregularity. I lived on the boulevard, in theaters and cafés, always out of doors, always without a regular home, though I was comfortably housed. I was one of those thousands of beings who let themselves float through life like corks, for whom the walls of Paris are the walls of the world, and who have no care about anything, having no passion for anything. I was what is called a good fellow, without accomplishments and without faults. That is all. And I judge myself correctly.

" ' Then, from twenty to forty years, my existence flowed along smoothly or rapidly without any remarkable event. How quickly they pass, the monotonous years of Paris, which impress on the soul no red-letter memories, long, hurried years,

frivolous and gay, when one eats, drinks, and laughs without knowing why, one's lips reaching out for all they can taste and all they can kiss, without caring for anything. One is young, one grows old without doing any of the things that others do, without any one, any roots, any bond, almost without friends, without family, without wife, without children.

" ' So, from the time I was twenty my existence passed uneventfully until I reached my fortieth year. In order to celebrate this anniversary, I invited myself to take a good dinner all alone in one of the principal cafés.

" ' After dinner, I debated what I should do. I felt disposed to go to a theater; and then I took a notion to make a pilgrimage to the Latin Quarter, where I had lived when a law student. So I made my way across Paris, and without premeditation went into one of those beer houses where they have women waiters.

" ' The one who waited on my table was quite young, pretty, and merry-looking. I asked her to take a drink, and she at once consented. She sat down opposite me, and gazed at me with a practised eye, without knowing with what kind of a man she had to do. She was a fair-haired woman, or rather a fair-haired girl, a fresh young creature, whom you guessed to be rosy and plump under her swelling bodice. I talked to her in that flattering, idiotic manner we always adopt with girls of this sort; and as she was truly charming, the idea suddenly occurred to me to take her with me—always with a view to celebrating my fortieth year. It was neither a long nor difficult task. She was free, she told me, for the past fortnight, and she forthwith accepted

my invitation to take supper with me in the Halles when her work should be finished.

" ' As I was afraid she might give me the slip—you can never tell what may happen, or who may come into those beer shops, or what wind may blow into a woman's head—I remained there all the evening waiting for her.

" ' I, too, had been free for the past month or two, and watching this pretty débutante of love going from table to table, I asked myself the question whether it would not be worth my while to take her to live with me for some time. I am here relating to you one of those ordinary adventures which occur every day in the lives of men in Paris.

" ' Pardon these gross details. Those who have not loved in a poetic fashion take and choose women, as you choose a chop in a butcher's shop, without caring about anything save the quality of their flesh.

" ' Accordingly, I took her to her own house—for I had respect for my own sheets. It was a little working girl's lodging on the fifth floor, clean and poor, and I spent two delightful hours there. This little girl had a certain grace and a rare attractiveness.

" ' When I was about to leave the room, I advanced toward the mantelpiece in order to place there the stipulated present, after having appointed a second meeting with the girl, who remained in bed. I got a vague glimpse of a clock without a globe, two flower vases and two photographs, one of them very old, one of those proofs on glass called daguerreotypes. I carelessly bent forward toward this portrait, and remained speechless at the sight, too amazed to comprehend. . . . It was my own likeness, the first portrait of myself, which had been

taken in the days when I was a student in the Latin Quarter.

" ' I abruptly snatched it up to examine it more closely. I was not mistaken; I felt a desire to burst out laughing, so unexpected and queer did the thing appear to me.

" ' I asked:

" ' " Who is this gentleman? "

" ' She replied:

" ' " 'Tis my father, whom I did not know. Mamma left it to me, telling me to keep it, as it might be useful to me perhaps, one day——"

" ' She hesitated, began to laugh, and went on:

" ' " I don't know in what way; I don't think he'll care to acknowledge me."

" ' My heart began beating wildly, like the mad gallop of a runaway horse. I replaced the portrait, laying it down flat on the mantelpiece. On top of it I placed, without even knowing what I was doing, two notes for a hundred francs which I had in my pocket, and I rushed away exclaiming:

" ' " We'll meet again soon—by-bye, darling—by-bye."

" ' I heard her answering:

" ' " Till Tuesday."

" ' I was on the dark staircase, which I descended, groping my way down.

" ' When I got outside, I saw that it was raining, and started at a great pace down some street or other.

" ' I walked straight on, stupefied, distracted, trying to jog my memory! Was this possible? Yes. I remembered all of a sudden a girl who had written to me, about a month after our rupture, that she was *enceinte*. I had torn or burnt the letter, and had

forgotten all about the matter. I should have looked at the woman's photograph over the girl's mantelpiece. But would I have recognized it? It was the photograph of an old woman, it seemed to me.

" ' I reached the quay. I saw a bench, and sat down on it. It continued raining. People passed from time to time under umbrellas. Life appeared to me odious and revolting, full of miseries, of shames, of infamies, deliberate or unconscious. My daughter! . . . And Paris, this vast Paris, somber, mournful, dirty, sad, black, with all those houses shut up, was full of such things, adulteries, incests, violated children. I recalled to mind what I had been told about bridges haunted by the infamous votaries of vice.

" ' I had acted, without wishing it, without being aware of it, in a worse fashion than these ignoble beings. I had entered my own daughter's bed!

" ' I was on the point of throwing myself into the water. I was mad! I wandered about till dawn, then I came back to my own house to think.

" ' Then I did what appeared to me the wisest thing. I desired a notary to send for this little girl, and to ask her under what conditions her mother had given her the portrait of him whom she supposed to be her father, stating that he was intrusted with this duty by a friend.

" ' The notary executed my commands. It was on her death-bed that this woman had designated the father of her daughter, and in the presence of a priest, whose name was given to me.

" ' Then, still in the name of this unknown friend, I made over half of my fortune to this child, about one hundred and forty thousand francs, of which

she could only touch the interest. Then I resigned my position—and here I am.

" ' While wandering along this shore, I found this mountain, and I stopped here—how long it will be, I do not know.

" ' What do you think of me, and of what I did? '

" I replied as I extended my hand to him:

" ' You have done what you ought to do. Many others would have attached less importance to this odious fatality.'

" He went on:

" ' I know that, but I nearly went mad on account of it. It seems I had a sensitive soul without ever suspecting it. And now I am afraid of Paris, as believers are bound to be afraid of Hell. I received a blow on the head—that is all—a blow resembling the fall of a tile when one is passing through the street. I have been getting better for some time past.'

" I left my hermit. I was much disturbed by his narrative.

" I saw him again twice, and then went away, for I never remain in the South after the month of May.

" When I came back the following year, the man was no longer on Snake Mountain; and I have never since heard anything about him.

" This is the history of my hermit."

# ABANDONED

REALLY think you must be mad, my dear, to go for a country walk in such weather as this. You have had some very strange notions for the last two months. You drag me to the seaside in spite of myself, when you have never once had such a whim during all the forty-four years that we have been married. You chose Fécamp, which is a very dull town, without consulting me in the matter, and now you are seized with such a rage for walking, you who hardly ever stir out on foot, that you want to take a country walk on the hottest day of the year. Ask d'Apreval to go with you, as he is ready to gratify all your whims. As for me, I am going back to have a nap."

Madame de Cadour turned to her old friend and said:

"Will you come with me, Monsieur d'Apreval?"

He bowed with a smile, and with all the gallantry of former years:

"I will go wherever you go," he replied.

"Very well, then, go and get a sunstroke," Monsieur de Cadour said; and he went back to the Hôtel des Bains, to lie down for an hour or two.

As soon as they were alone, the old lady and her old companion set off, and she said to him in a low voice, squeezing his hand:

"At last! At last!"

"You are mad," he said in a whisper. "I assure you that you are mad. Think of the risk you are running. If that man——"

She started.

"Oh! Henri, do not say *that man,* when you are speaking of him."

"Very well," he said abruptly, "if our son guesses anything, if he has any suspicions, he will have you, he will have us both in his power. You have got on without seeing him for the last forty years; what is the matter with you today?"

They had been going up the long street that leads from the sea to the town, and now they turned to the right, to go to Etretat. The white road stretched in front of him, then under a blaze of brilliant sunshine, so they went on slowly in the burning heat. She had taken her old friend's arm, and was looking straight in front of her, with a fixed and haunted gaze, and at last she said:

"And so you have not seen him again, either?"

"No, never."

"Is it possible?"

"My dear friend, do not let us begin that discussion again. I have a wife and children and you

have a husband, so we both of us have much to fear from other people's opinion."

She did not reply; she was thinking of her long past youth, and of many sad things that had occurred. How well she recalled all the details of their early friendship, his smiles, the way he used to linger, in order to watch her until she was indoors. What happy days they were, the only really delicious days she had ever enjoyed, and how quickly they were over!

And then—her discovery—of the penalty she paid! What anguish!

Of that journey to the South, that long journey, her sufferings, her constant terror, that secluded life in the small, solitary house on the shore of the Mediterranean, at the bottom of a garden, which she did not venture to leave. How well she remembered those long days which she spent lying under an orange tree, looking up at the round, red fruit, amid the green leaves. How she used to long to go out, as far as the sea, whose fresh breezes came to her over the wall, and whose small waves she could hear lapping on the beach. She dreamed of its immense blue expanse sparkling under the sun, with the white sails of the small vessels, and a mountain on the horizon. But she did not dare to go outside the gate; suppose anybody had recognized her!

And those days of waiting, those last days of misery and expectation! The impending suffering, and, then, that terrible night! What misery she had endured, and what a night it was! How she had groaned and screamed! She could still see the pale face of her lover, who kissed her hand every moment, and the clean-shaven face of the doctor, and the nurse's white cap.

And what she felt when she heard the child's feeble cries, that wail, that first effort of a human's voice!

And the next day! the next day! the only day of her life on which she had seen and kissed her son; for, from that time, she had never even caught a glimpse of him.

And what a long, void existence hers had been since then, with the thought of that child always, always floating before her. She had never seen her son, that little creature that had been part of herself, even once since then; they had taken him from her, carried him away, and hidden him. All she knew was that he had been brought up by some peasants in Normandy, that he had become a peasant himself, had married well, and that his father, whose name he did not know, had settled a handsome sum of money on him.

How often during the last forty years had she wished to go and see him, and to embrace him. She could not imagine to herself that he had grown! She always thought of that small human atom which she had held in her arms and pressed to her side for a day.

How often she had said to M. d'Apreval: "I cannot bear it any longer; I must go and see him."

But he had always stopped her, and kept her from going. She would be unable to restrain and to master herself; their son would guess it and take advantage of her, blackmail her; she would be lost.

* * * * * * *

"What is he like?" she said.

"I do not know; I have not seen him again, either."

" Is it possible? To have a son, and not to know him; to be afraid of him and to reject him as if he were a disgrace! It is horrible."

They went along the dusty road, overcome by the scorching sun, and continually ascending that interminable hill.

" One might take it for a punishment," she continued; " I have never had another child, and I could no longer resist the longing to see him, which has possessed me for forty years. You men cannot understand that. You must remember that I shall not live much longer, and suppose I should never see him; never have seen him! . . . Is it possible? How could I wait so long? I have thought about him every day since, and what a terrible existence mine has been! I have never awakened, never, do you understand, without my first thoughts being of him, of my child. How is he? Oh! How guilty I feel toward him! Ought one to fear what the world may say, in a case like this? I ought to have left everything to go after him, to bring him up and to show my love for him. I should certainly have been much happier, but I did not dare, I was a coward. How I have suffered! Oh! How those poor, abandoned children must hate their mothers! "

She stopped suddenly, for she was choked by her sobs. The whole valley was deserted and silent in the dazzling light and the overwhelming heat, and only the grasshoppers uttered their shrill, continuous chirp among the sparse yellow grass on both sides of the road.

" Sit down a little," he said.

She allowed herself to be led to the side of the ditch, and sank down with her face in her hands. Her white hair, which hung in curls on both sides

of her face, had become tangled. She wept, overcome by profound grief, while he stood facing her, uneasy and not knowing what to say, and he merely murmured: "Come, take courage."

She got up.

"I will," she said, and wiping her eyes, she began to walk again with the uncertain steps of an elderly woman.

A little farther on, the road passed beneath a clump of trees, which hid a few houses, and they could distinguish the vibrating and regular blows of a blacksmith's hammer on the anvil; and presently they saw a wagon standing on the right side of the road in front of a low cottage, and two men shoeing a horse under a shed.

Monsieur d'Apreval went up to them.

"Where is Pierre Benedict's farm?" he asked.

"Take the road to the left, close to the inn, and then go straight on; it is the third house past Poret's. There is a small spruce fir close to the gate; you cannot make a mistake."

They turned to the left; she was walking very slowly now; her legs threatened to give way, and her heart was beating so violently that she felt as if she should be suffocated, while at every step she murmured, as if in prayer:

"Oh! Heaven! Heaven!"

Monsieur d'Apreval, who was also nervous and rather pale, said to her somewhat gruffly:

"If you cannot manage to control your feelings, you will betray yourself at once. Do try and restrain yourself."

"How can I?" she replied. "My child! When I think that I am going to see my child."

They were going along one of those narrow coun-

try lanes between farmyards, that are concealed beneath a double row of beech trees, at either side of the ditches, and suddenly they found themselves in front of a gate, beside which there was a young spruce fir.

"This is it," he said.

She stopped suddenly and looked about her. The courtyard, which was planted with apple trees, was large and extended as far as the small thatched dwelling house. On the opposite side were the stable, the barn, the cow-house, and the poultry house, while the gig, the wagon, and the manure cart were under a slated outhouse. Four calves were grazing under the shade of the trees, and black hens were wandering all about the inclosure.

All was perfectly still; the house door was open, but nobody was to be seen, and so they went in, when immediately a large black dog came out of a barrel that was standing under a pear tree, and began to bark furiously.

There were four bee-hives on boards against the wall of the house.

Monsieur d'Apreval stood outside and called out:

"Is anybody at home?"

Then a child appeared, a little girl of about ten, dressed in a chemise and a linen petticoat, with dirty, bare legs, and a timid and cunning look. She remained standing in the doorway, as if to prevent any one going in.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is your father in?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"And your mother?"

"Gone after the cows."

"Will she be back soon?"

"I don't know."

But suddenly, the lady, as if she feared that he might force her to return, said quickly:

"I will not go without having seen him."

"We will wait for him, my dear friend."

As they turned away, they saw a peasant woman coming toward the house, carrying two tin pails, which appeared to be heavy, and which glistened brightly in the sunlight.

She limped with her right leg, and in her brown knitted jacket, that was faded by the sun and washed out by the rain, she looked like a poor, wretched, dirty servant.

"Here is mamma," the child said.

When she got close to the house, she looked at the strangers angrily and suspiciously, and then she went in, as if she had not seen them. She looked old, and had a hard, yellow, wrinkled face, one of those wooden faces that country people so often have.

Monsieur d'Apreval called her back.

"I beg your pardon, Madame, but we came in to know whether you could sell us two glasses of milk."

She was grumbling when she reappeared in the door, after putting down her pails.

"I don't sell milk," she replied.

"We are very thirsty," he said, "and Madame is very tired. Can we not get something to drink?"

The peasant woman gave them an uneasy and cunning glance, and then she made up her mind.

"As you are here, I will give you some," she

said, going into the house, and almost immediately the child came out and brought two chairs, which she placed under an apple tree, and then the mother in turn brought out two bowls of foaming milk, which she gave to the visitors. She did not return to the house, however, but remained standing near them, as if to watch them and to find out for what purpose they had come there.

"You have come from Fécamp?" she said.

"Yes," Monsieur d'Apreval replied, "we are staying at Fécamp for the summer."

And then after a short silence he continued:

"Have you any fowls you could sell us, every week?"

The woman hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"Yes, I think I have. I suppose you want young ones?"

"Yes, of course."

"What do you pay for them in the market?"

D'Apreval, who had not the least idea, turned to his companion:

"What are you paying for poultry in Fécamp, my dear lady?"

"Four francs, and four francs fifty centimes," she said, her eyes full of tears, while the farmer's wife, who was looking at her askance, asked in much surprise:

"Is the lady ill, as she is crying?"

He did not know what to say, and replied with some hesitation:

"No . . . no . . . but she lost her watch as we came, a very handsome watch, and that troubles her. If anybody should find it, please let us know."

Mother Benedict did not reply, as she thought it a very equivocal sort of answer, but suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh! here is my husband!"

She was the only one who had seen him, as she was facing the gate. D'Apreval started, and Madame de Cadour nearly fell, as she turned round suddenly on her chair.

A man bent nearly double and out of breath stood there, ten yards from them, dragging a cow at the end of a rope. Without taking any notice of the visitors, he said:

"Confound it! What a brute!"

And he went past them, and disappeared in the cow-house.

Her tears had dried quickly, as she sat there startled, without a word, and with the one thought in her mind, that this was her son, and D'Apreval, whom the same thought had struck very unpleasantly, said in an agitated voice:

"Is this Monsieur Benedict?"

"Who told you his name?" the wife asked, still rather suspiciously.

"The blacksmith at the corner of the high-road," he replied, and then they were all silent, with their eyes fixed on the door of the cow-house, which formed a sort of black hole in the wall of the building. Nothing could be seen inside, but they heard a vague noise, movements, and footsteps and the sound of hoofs, which were deadened by the straw on the floor, and soon the man reappeared in the door, wiping his forehead, and went toward the house with long, slow strides. He passed the strangers without seeming to notice them, and said to his wife:

"Go and draw me a jug of cider; I am very thirsty."

Then he went back into the house, while his wife went into the cellar, and left the two Parisians alone.

"Let us go, let us go, Henri," Madame de Cadour said, nearly distracted with grief, and so d'Apreval took her by the arm, helped her to rise, and sustaining her with all his strength, for he felt that she was nearly fainting, he led her out, after throwing five francs on one of the chairs.

As soon as they were outside the gate, she began to sob, and said, shaking with grief:

"Oh! oh! is that what you have made of him?"

He was very pale, and replied coldly:

"I did what I could. His farm is worth eighty thousand francs, and that is more than most of the sons of the middle classes have."

They returned slowly, without speaking a word. She was still crying; the tears ran down her cheeks continually for a time, but by degrees they stopped, and they went back to Fécamp, where they found Monsieur de Cadour waiting dinner for them, and as soon as he saw them, he began to laugh, and exclaimed:

"So my wife has had a sunstroke, and I am very glad of it. I really think she has lost her head for some time past!"

Neither of them replied, and when the husband asked them, rubbing his hands:

"Well, I hope that at least you have had a pleasant walk?"

Monsieur d'Apreval replied:

"A delightful walk, I assure you; perfectly delightful."

## THE UMBRELLA

MADAME OREILLE was an economical woman; she knew the value of a centime, and possessed a whole storehouse of strict principles with regard to the multiplication of money, so that her cook found the greatest difficulty in making what the servants call their market-penny, and her husband was hardly allowed any pocket-money at all. They were, however, very comfortably off, and had no children; but it really pained Madame Oreille to see money spent; it was like tearing at her heartstrings when she had to take any of those nice crown-pieces out of her pocket; and whenever she had to spend anything, no matter how necessary it might be, she slept badly the next night.

Oreille was continually saying to his wife:

"You really might be more liberal, as we have no children, and never spend our income."

"You don't know what may happen," she used

to reply. "It is better to have too much than too little."

She was a little woman of about forty, very active, rather hasty, wrinkled, very neat and tidy, and with a very short temper.

Her husband frequently complained of all the privations she made him endure; some of them were particularly painful to him, as they touched his vanity.

He was one of the head clerks in the War Office, and only stayed on there in obedience to his wife's wish, to increase their income, which they did not nearly spend.

For two years he had always come to the office with the same old patched umbrella, to the great amusement of his fellow clerks. At last he got tired of their jokes, and insisted upon his wife buying him a new one. She bought one for eight francs and a half, one of those cheap articles which large houses sell as an advertisement. When the men in the office saw the article, which was being sold in Paris by the thousand, they began their jokes again, and Oreille had a dreadful time of it. They even made a song about it, which he heard from morning till night all over the immense building.

Oreille was very angry, and peremptorily told his wife to get him a new one, a good silk one, for twenty francs, and to bring him the bill, so that he might see that it was all right.

She bought him one for eighteen francs, and said, getting red with anger as she gave it to her husband:

"This will last you for five years at least."

Oreille felt quite triumphant, and received a small ovation at the office with his new acquisition.

When he went home in the evening his wife said to him, looking at the umbrella uneasily:

"You should not leave it fastened up with the elastic; it will very likely cut the silk. You must take care of it, for I shall not buy you a new one in a hurry."

She took it, unfastened it, and remained dumfounded with astonishment and rage; in the middle of the silk there was a hole as big as a sixpenny-piece; it had been made with the end of a cigar.

"What is that?" she screamed.

Her husband replied quietly, without looking at it:

"What is it? What do you mean?"

She was choking with rage, and could hardly get out a word.

"You—you — have — burned — your umbrella! Why—you must be—mad! Do you wish to ruin us outright?"

He turned round, and felt that he was growing pale.

"What are you talking about?"

"I say that you have burned your umbrella. Just look here——"

And rushing at him, as if she were going to beat him, she violently thrust the little circular burned hole under his nose.

He was so utterly struck dumb at the sight of it that he could only stammer out:

"What—what is it? How should I know? I have done nothing, I will swear. I don't know what is the matter with the umbrella."

"You have been playing tricks with it at the office; you have been playing the fool and opening it, to show it off!" she screamed.

"I only opened it once, to let them see what a nice one it was, that is all, I swear."

But she shook with rage, and got up one of those conjugal scenes which make a peaceable man dread the domestic hearth more than a battlefield where bullets are raining.

She mended it with a piece of silk cut out of the old umbrella, which was of a different color, and the next day Oreille went off very humbly with the mended article in his hand. He put it into a cupboard, and thought no more of it than of some unpleasant recollection.

But he had scarcely got home that evening when his wife took the umbrella from him, opened it, and nearly had a fit when she saw what had befallen it, for the disaster was irreparable. It was covered with small holes which evidently proceeded from burns, just as if some one had emptied the ashes from a lighted pipe on to it. It was done for utterly, irreparably.

She looked at it without a word, in too great a passion to be able to say anything. He also, when he saw the damage, remained almost dumfounded, in a state of frightened consternation.

They looked at each other, then he looked at the floor; and the next moment she threw the useless article at his head, screaming out in a transport of the most violent rage, for she had recovered her voice by that time:

"Oh! you brute! you brute! You did it on purpose, but I will pay you out for it. You shall not have another."

And then the scene began again, and after the storm had raged for an hour, he at last was enabled to explain himself. He declared that he could

not understand it at all, and that it could only proceed from malice or from vengeance.

A ring at the bell saved him; it was a friend whom they were expecting to dinner.

Madame Oreille stated the case to him. As for buying a new umbrella, that was out of the question; her husband should not have another.

The friend very sensibly said that in that case his clothes would be spoiled, and they were certainly worth more than the umbrella. But the little woman, who was still in a rage, replied:

"Very well, then, when it rains he may have the kitchen umbrella, for I will not give him a new silk one."

Oreille utterly rebelled at such an idea.

"All right," he said; "then I shall resign my post. I am not going to the office with the kitchen umbrella."

The friend interposed:

"Have this one recovered; it will not cost much."

But Madame Oreille, being in the rage that she was, said:

"It will cost at least eight francs to recover it. Eight and eighteen are twenty-six. Just fancy, twenty-six francs for an umbrella! It is madness!"

The friend, who was only a poor man of the middle classes, had an inspiration:

"Make your fire insurance pay for it. The companies pay for all articles that are burned, as long as the damage has been done in your own house."

On hearing this advice the little woman calmed down immediately, and then, after a moment's reflection, she said to her husband:

"To-morrow, before going to your office, you will go to the Maternelle Insurance Company, show them the state your umbrella is in, and make them pay for the damage."

Monsieur Oreille fairly jumped, he was so startled at the proposal.

"I would not do it for my life! It is eighteen francs lost, that is all. It will not ruin us."

The next morning he took a walking-stick when he went out, and, luckily, it was a fine day.

Left at home, Madame Oreille could not get over the loss of her eighteen francs by any means. She had put the umbrella on the dining-room table, and she looked at it without being able to come to any determination.

Every moment she thought of the insurance company, but she did not dare to encounter the quizzical looks of the gentlemen who might receive her, for she was very timid before people, and blushed at a mere nothing, and was embarrassed when she had to speak to strangers.

But the regret at the loss of the eighteen francs pained her as if she had been wounded. She tried not to think of it any more, and yet every moment the recollection of the loss struck her painfully. What was she to do, however? Time went on, and she could not decide; but suddenly, like all cowards, on making a resolve she became determined.

"I will go, and we will see what will happen."

But first of all she was obliged to prepare the umbrella so that the disaster might be complete, and the reason of it quite evident. She took a match from the mantelpiece, and between the ribs she burned a hole as big as the palm of her hand; then

she delicately rolled it up, fastened it with the elastic band, put on her bonnet and shawl, and went quickly toward the Rue de Rivoli, where the insurance office was.

But the nearer she got, the slower she walked. What was she going to say, and what reply would she get?

She looked at the numbers of the houses; there were still twenty-eight. That was all right, so she had time to consider, and she walked slower and slower. Suddenly she saw a door on which was a large brass plate with "La Maternelle Fire Insurance Office" engraved on it. Already! She waited a moment, for she felt nervous and almost ashamed; then she walked past, came back, walked past again, and came back again.

At last she said to herself:

"I must go in, however, so I may as well do it sooner as later."

She could not help noticing, however, how her heart beat as she entered.

She went into an enormous room with grated wicket openings all round, and a man behind each of them, and as a gentleman, carrying a number of papers, passed her, she stopped him and said timidly:

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but can you tell me where I must apply for payment for anything that has been accidentally burned?"

He replied in a sonorous voice:

"The first door on the left; that is the department you want."

This frightened her still more, and she felt inclined to run away, to put in no claim, to sacrifice her eighteen francs. But the idea of that sum re-

vived her courage, and she went upstairs, out of breath, stopping at almost every other step.

She knocked at a door which she saw on the first landing, and a clear voice said, in answer:

"Come in!"

She obeyed mechanically, and found herself in a large room where three solemn gentlemen, all with a decoration in their buttonholes, were standing talking.

One of them asked her: "What do you want, Madame?"

She could hardly get out her words, but stammered: "I have come—I have come on account of an accident, something——"

He very politely pointed out a seat to her.

"If you will kindly sit down I will attend to you in a moment."

And, returning to the other two, he went on with the conversation.

"The company, gentlemen, does not consider that it is under any obligation to you for more than four hundred thousand francs, and we can pay no attention to your claim to the further sum of a hundred thousand, which you wish to make us pay. Besides that, the surveyor's valuation——"

One of the others interrupted him:

"That is quite enough, Monsieur; the law course will decide between us, and we have nothing further to do than to take our leave." And they went out after mutual ceremonious bows.

Oh! if she could only have gone away with them, how gladly she would have done it; she would have run away and given up everything. But it was too late, for the gentleman came back, and said, bowing:

"What can I do for you, Madame?"

She could scarcely speak, but at last she managed to say:

"I have come—for this."

The manager looked at the object which she held out to him in mute astonishment.

With trembling fingers she tried to undo the elastic, and succeeding, after several attempts, she hastily opened the damaged remains of the umbrella.

"It looks to me to be in a very bad state of health," he said compassionately.

"It cost me twenty francs," she said, with some hesitation.

He seemed astonished. "Really! As much as that?"

"Yes, it was a capital article, and I wanted you to see the condition it is in."

"Yes, yes, I see; very well. But I really do not understand what it can have to do with me."

She began to feel uncomfortable; perhaps this company did not pay for such small articles, and she said:

"But—it is burned."

He could not deny it.

"I see that very well," he replied.

She remained open-mouthed, not knowing what to say next; then, suddenly recollecting that she had left out the main thing, she said hastily:

"I am Madame Oreille; we are insured in La Maternelle, and I have come to claim the value of this damage.

"I only want you to have it recovered," she added quickly, fearing a positive refusal.

The manager was rather embarrassed, and said:

"But, really, Madame, we do not sell umbrellas; we cannot undertake such kinds of repairs."

The little woman felt her courage reviving; she was not going to give up without a struggle; she was not even afraid any more, and said:

"I only want you to pay me the cost of repairing it; I can quite well get it done myself."

The gentleman seemed rather confused.

"Really, Madame, it is such a very small matter! We are never asked to give compensation for such trivial losses. You must allow that we cannot make good pocket-handkerchiefs, gloves, brooms, slippers, all the small articles which are every day exposed to the chances of being burned."

She got red in the face, and felt inclined to fly into a rage.

"But, Monsieur, last December one of our chimneys caught fire, and caused at least five hundred francs damage; my husband made no claim on the company, and so it is only just that it should pay for my umbrella now."

The manager, guessing that she was telling a lie, said, with a smile:

"You must acknowledge, Madame, that it is surprising that Monsieur Oreille should have asked no compensation for damages amounting to five hundred francs, and should now claim five or six francs for mending an umbrella."

She was not the least put out, and replied:

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, the five hundred francs affected Monsieur Oreille's pocket; this damage, amounting to eighteen francs, concerns Madame Oreille's pocket, which is a totally different matter."

As he saw that he had no chance of getting rid

of her, and that he would only be wasting his time, he said resignedly:

"Will you kindly tell me how the damage was done?"

She felt that she had won the victory, and said:

"This is how it happened, Monsieur: In our hall there is a bronze stick and umbrella stand, and the other day, when I came in, I put my umbrella into it. I must tell you that just above there is a shelf for the candlesticks and matches. I put out my hand, took three or four matches, and struck one, but it missed fire, so I struck another, which ignited, but went out immediately, and a third did the same."

The manager interrupted her to make a joke.

"I suppose they were government matches, then?"

She did not understand him, and went on:

"Very likely. At any rate, the fourth caught fire, and I lit my candle, and went into my room to go to bed; but in a quarter of an hour I fancied that I smelt something burning, and I have always been terribly afraid of fire. If ever we have an accident it will not be my fault, I assure you. I am terribly nervous since our chimney was on fire, as I told you; so I got up, and hunted about everywhere, sniffing like a dog after game, and at last I noticed that my umbrella was burning. Most likely a match had fallen between the folds and burned it. You can see how it has damaged it."

The manager had taken his cue, and asked her:

"What do you estimate the damage at?"

She did not know what to say, as she was not certain what amount to put on it, but at last she replied:

"Perhaps you had better get it done yourself. I will leave it to you."

He, however, naturally refused.

"No, Madame, I cannot do that. Tell me the amount of your claim, that is all I want to know."

"Well!—I think that—— Look here, Monsieur, I do not want to make any money out of you, so I will tell you what we will do. I will take my umbrella to the maker, who will recover it in good, durable silk, and I will bring the bill to you. Will that suit you, Monsieur?"

"Perfectly, Madame; we will settle it so. Here is a note for the cashier, who will repay you whatever it costs you."

He gave a paper to Madame Oreille, who took it, got up and went out, thanking him, for she was in a hurry to escape lest he should change his mind.

She went briskly through the streets, looking out for a really good umbrella-maker, and when she found a shop which appeared to be a first-class one, she went in, and said, confidently:

"I want this umbrella recovered in silk, good silk. Use the very best and strongest you have; I don't mind what it costs."

# THE LOG

THE drawing-room was small, full of heavy drapery, and discreetly fragrant. A large fire burned in the grate, and a solitary lamp at one end of the mantelpiece threw a soft light on the two persons who were talking.

She, the mistress of the house, was an old lady with white hair, but one of those old ladies whose unwrinkled skin is as smooth as the finest paper, and scented, impregnated with perfume, with the delicate essences which she had used in her bath for so many years.

He was a very old friend, who had never married, a constant friend, a companion in the journey of life, but nothing else.

They had not spoken for about a minute, and were both looking at the fire, dreaming no matter of what, in one of those moments of friendly silence between people who have no need to be con-

stantly talking in order to be happy together, when suddenly a large log, a stump covered with burning roots, fell out. It fell over the firedogs into the drawing-room, and rolled upon the carpet, scattering great sparks all round. The old lady, with a little scream, sprang to her feet to run away, while he kicked the log back on to the hearth, and stamped out all the burning sparks with his boots.

When the disaster was repaired, there was a strong smell of burning, and, sitting down opposite to his friend, the man looked at her with a smile, and said, as he pointed to the log:

"That is the reason why I never married."

She looked at him in astonishment, with the inquisitive gaze of women who wish to know everything, that eye which women have who are no longer very young, in which a complex, and often roguish, curiosity is reflected, and she asked:

"How so?"

"Oh! it is a long story," he replied; "a rather sad and unpleasant story.

"My old friends were often surprised at the coldness which suddenly sprang up between one of my best friends, whose Christian name was Julien, and myself. They could not understand how two such intimate and inseparable friends as we had been could suddenly become almost strangers to one another, and I will tell you the reason of it.

"He and I used to live together at one time. We were never apart, and the friendship that united us seemed so strong that nothing could break it.

"One evening when he came home, he told me that he was going to get married, and it gave me a shock as if he had robbed me or betrayed me.

When a man's friend marries, it is all over between them. The jealous affection of a woman, that suspicious, uneasy, and carnal affection, will not tolerate the sturdy and frank attachment, that attachment of the mind, of the heart, and that mutual confidence which exists between two men.

"You see, however great the love may be that unites them, a man and a woman are always strangers in mind and intellect; they remain belligerents, they belong to different races. There must always be a conqueror and a conquered, a master and a slave; now the one, now the other—they are never two equals. They press each other's hands, those hands trembling with amorous passion; but they never press them with a long, strong, loyal pressure, with that pressure which seems to open hearts and to lay them bare in a burst of sincere, strong, manly affection. Philosophers of old, instead of marrying and procreating, as a consolation for their old age, children who would abandon them, sought for a good, reliable friend, and grew old with him in that communion of thought which can only exist between men.

"Well, my friend Julien married. His wife was pretty, charming, a little, curly-haired blonde, plump and lively, who seemed to worship him. At first, I went but rarely to their house, feeling myself *de trop*. But, somehow, they attracted me to their house; they were constantly inviting me, and seemed very fond of me. Consequently, by degrees, I allowed myself to be allured by the charm of their life. I often dined with them, and frequently, when I returned home at night, thought that I would do as he had done, and get married, as my empty house now seemed very dull.

"They appeared to be very much in love, and were never apart.

"Well, one evening, Julien wrote and asked me to go to dinner, and I naturally went.

"'My dear fellow,' he said, 'I must go out directly afterward on business, and I shall not be back until eleven o'clock; but I shall be back at eleven precisely, and I reckon on you to keep Bertha company.'

"The young woman smiled.

"'It was my idea,' she said, 'to send for you.'

"I held out my hand to her.

"'You are as nice as ever,' I said, and I felt a long, friendly pressure of my fingers, but I paid no attention to it; so we sat down to dinner, and at eight o'clock Julien went out.

"As soon as he had gone, a kind of strange embarrassment immediately seemed to arise between his wife and me. We had never been alone together yet, and in spite of our daily increasing intimacy, this *tête-à-tête* placed us in a new position. At first I spoke vaguely of those indifferent matters with which one fills up an embarrassing silence, but she did not reply, and remained opposite to me with her head down in an undecided manner, as if she were thinking over some difficult subject, and as I was at a loss for small talk, I held my tongue. It is surprising how hard it is at times to find anything to say.

"And then, also, I felt something in the air, something I could not express, one of those mysterious premonitions that warn one of another person's secret intentions in regard to yourself, whether they be good or evil.

"That painful silence lasted some time, and then Bertha said to me:

"'Will you kindly put a log on the fire, for it is going out.'

"So I opened the box where the wood was kept, which was placed just where yours is, took out the largest log, and put it on the top of the others, which were three-parts burned, and then silence again reigned in the room.

"In a few minutes, the log was burning so brightly that it scorched our faces, and the young woman raised her eyes to me—eyes that had a strange look to me.

"'It is too hot, now,' she said; 'let us go and sit on the sofa over there.'

"So we went and sat on the sofa, and then she said suddenly, looking me full in the face:

"'What should you do if a woman were to tell you that she was in love with you?'

"'Upon my word,' I replied, very much at a loss for an answer, 'I cannot foresee such a case; but it would very much depend upon the woman.'

"She gave a hard, nervous, vibrating laugh; one of those false laughs which seem as if they must break thin glass, and then she added: 'Men are never either venturesome nor spiteful.' And, after a moment's silence, she continued: 'Have you ever been in love, Monsieur Paul?' I was obliged to acknowledge that I certainly had been, and she asked me to tell her all about it; whereupon, I made up some story or other. She listened to me attentively, with frequent signs of approbation and contempt, and then suddenly she said:

"'No, you understand nothing about the subject. It seems to me that real love must unsettle

the mind, upset the nerves, and distract the head; that it must—how shall I express it?—be dangerous, even terrible, almost criminal and sacrilegious; that it must be a kind of treason; I mean to say that it is bound to break laws, fraternal bonds, sacred obligations; when love is tranquil, easy, lawful, and without dangers, is it really love?'

"I did not know what answer to give her, and I made this philosophical reflection to myself: 'Oh! female brain, here, indeed, you show yourself!'

"While speaking, she had assumed a demure, saintly air; and, resting on the cushions, she stretched herself out at full length, with her head on my shoulder, and her dress pulled up a little, so as to show her red silk stockings, which the firelight made look still brighter. In a minute or two, she continued:

"'I suppose I have frightened you?' I protested against such a notion, and she leaned against my breast altogether; and, without looking at me, she said: 'If I were to tell you that I love you, what would you do?'

"And before I could think of an answer, she had thrown her arms round my neck, had quickly drawn my head down, and put her lips to mine.

"Oh! My dear friend, I can tell you that I did not feel at all happy! What! deceive Julien? become the lover of this little, silly, wrong-headed, deceitful woman, who was, no doubt, terribly sensual, and whom her husband no longer satisfied! To betray him continually, to deceive him, to play at being in love merely because I was attracted by forbidden fruit, by the danger incurred and the friendship betrayed! No, that did not suit me, but what was I to do? To imitate Joseph would be acting a very

stupid and, moreover, difficult part, for this woman was maddening in her perfidy, inflamed by audacity, palpitating, and excited. Let the man who has never felt on his lips the warm kiss of a woman who is ready to give herself to him throw the first stone at me——

"Well, a minute more—you understand what I mean? A minute more, and—I should have been—no, she would have been!—I beg your pardon, he would have been—when a loud noise made us both jump up. The log had fallen into the room, knocking over the fire-irons and the fender, and on to the carpet, which it had scorched, and had rolled under an armchair, which it would certainly set alight.

"I jumped up like a madman, and, as I was replacing on the fire that log which had saved me, the door opened hastily, and Julien came in.

"'I am free,' he said, with evident pleasure. 'The business was over two hours sooner than I expected!'

"Yes, my dear friend, without that log, I should have been caught in the very act, and you know what the consequences would have been!

"You may be sure that I took good care never to be found in a similar situation again; never, never. Soon afterward, I saw that Julien was giving me the 'cold shoulder,' as they say. His wife was evidently undermining our friendship; by degrees, he got rid of me, and we have altogether ceased to meet.

"I never married, which ought not to surprise you, I think."

# ALWAYS LOCK THE DOOR

THERE were four half-empty wine-glasses on the table, where sat four men, which indicated that the diners had reached their limit. They were beginning to talk in a rambling manner, regardless of what any one else might be saying; voices grew louder, gestures more animated, eyes brighter.

It was a dinner of confirmed old bachelors. They had instituted this regular banquet twenty years before, christening it "The Celibate," and, at the time, there were fourteen of them, all fully determined never to marry. Now only four of them were left; three were dead, and the other seven were married.

These four stuck firmly to it, and, as far as lay in their power, they scrupulously observed the rules which had been laid down at the beginning of their curious association. Their aims, as regarded women, were not noble, and they were unscrupulous in flirtation. For this reason, as soon as any of them

left the society, in order to set up in domestic life for himself, he took care to quarrel definitely with all his former companions.

Besides this, they were pledged at every dinner to relate most minutely their last adventures, which had given rise to this familiar phrase among them:

"To lie like an old bachelor."

They professed, moreover, the most profound contempt for woman, whom they talked of as a being made solely for their pleasure. They continually quoted Schopenhauer, who was their god, and his well-known essay "On Women"; they wished that harems and towers might be reintroduced, and had the ancient maxim: "Mulier, perpetuus infans," woven into their table linen, and below it, the line of Alfred de Vigny's:

*La femme, enfant malade et douze fois impure.*

So that, while despising women, they lived only for them; all their efforts and all their desires were directed toward them.

Those of them who had married called them old fops, made fun of them, and—feared them.

As soon as they began to feel the exhilarating effects of the champagne, they commenced to relate their old bachelor experiences.

On the day in question, these old fellows, for they were old by this time—and the older they grew the more remarkable love affairs they had to relate. For the last month, to hear them tell it, each of them had played the gallant; and the woman was always the youngest, the noblest, the richest, and the most beautiful!

After they had finished their tales, the one who, having spoken first, had been obliged to listen to all the others, rose, and said:

"Now that we have finished drawing the long bow, I should like to tell you, not my last, but my first adventure—I mean the first real adventure of my life. Not my first love affair, for that was very different, though it left me with a feeling of disappointment and sadness, as from a kind of moral shock.

"But one gets used to that; there is no doubt about it. For my part, however, I am very sorry it was not in my power to give the Creator the benefit of my advice when he was arranging these little matters. I wonder what I should have done? I am not quite sure, but I think with the English savant, John Stuart Mill, I should have managed differently; I should have found some more convenient and more poetical combination; yes—more poetical.

"I really think that the Creator showed himself to be too much of a naturalist . . . too . . . what shall I say? His invention lacks poetry.

"However, what I am going to tell you is about my first woman of the world, the first woman in society I ever made love to—I beg your pardon, I ought to say the first woman of the world that ever triumphed over me. For, at first, it is *we* who allow ourselves to be taken, while, later on—well, then it is quite another matter.

"She was a friend of my mother's, a charming woman in every way. When such women are chaste, it is generally from sheer stupidity, and when they are in love they are furiously so. And then—*we* are accused of corrupting *them!* Yes, yes, of course! With them it is always the rabbit that begins, and never the sportsman. I know all about it; they don't seem to be laying any snares, but they do it all the same, and do what they like with us, without

it being noticed; and then they actually accuse us of having ruined them, dishonored them, humiliated them, and all the rest of it.

"The woman in question certainly was a type. She may have been about thirty-five, while I was scarcely two-and-twenty. I no more thought of dishonoring her than I did of turning Trappist. Well, one day, when I was calling on her, and while I was looking at her dress with considerable astonishment, for she was in *déshabillé,* she took my hand and squeezed it—squeezed it, you know, as they will do at such moments—and said, with a deep sigh, one of those sighs, you know, which come from right down the bottom of the chest: 'Oh! don't look at me like that, child!' I got as red as a beet, and felt more nervous than usual, naturally. I was very much inclined to bolt, but she held my hand tightly, and, placing it on her well-developed bust, she said: 'Just feel how my heart beats!' Of course, it was beating, and I began to understand what was the matter, but did not know what to do. I have changed considerably since then.

"As I remained standing there, with one hand on the soft covering of her heart, while I held my hat in the other, and continuing to look at her with a confused, silly smile—a timid, frightened smile—she suddenly drew back, and said in an irritated voice:

"'Young man, what are you doing? You are indecent, and badly brought up.'

"You may be sure I took my hand away quickly, stopped smiling, and, stammering out some excuse, I got up and took my leave as if I had lost my head.

"But I was caught, and dreamt of her. I

thought her charming, adorable; I fancied that I loved her, that I had always loved her, and I determined to see her again.

" When I saw her again, she gave me a little smile, as an actress might behind the scenes. Oh, how that little smile upset me! And she shook hands with a long, significant pressure.

" From that day, it seems that I made love to her; at least, she declared afterward that I had ruined her, captured her, dishonored her, with rare Machiavelism, with consummate cleverness, with the perseverance of a mathematician, and the cunning of an Apache Indian.

" But one thing troubled me strangely. I was not bold enough to venture to go to a hotel in broad daylight with a woman on my arm, and I did not know whom to ask for advice.

" Now, my fair friend had often said, in joke, that every young man ought to have a room for himself somewhere or other from home. We lived in Paris, and this was a sort of inspiration. I took a room, and she came. She came one day in November; I should have liked to put off her visit, because I had no fire, and I had no fire because the chimney smoked. The very evening before, I had spoken to my landlord, a retired shopkeeper, about it, and he had promised that he would send for the chimney sweep in a day or two to get it all put to rights.

" As soon as she came in, I said:

" ' There is no fire, because my chimney smokes.'

" She did not even appear to hear me, but stammered: ' That does not matter, I have . . .'; and when I looked surprised, she stopped short in confusion, and then went on: ' I don't know what I am

saying; I am mad—I have lost my head—oh! what am I doing? Why did I come? How unhappy I am! What a disgrace, what a disgrace!' And she threw herself, sobbing, into my arms.

"I thought that she really felt remorse, and swore that I would respect her. Then, moreover, she sank down at my knees, sighing: 'But don't you see that I love you, that you have overcome me, that it seems as though you had thrown a charm over me?'

"Then I thought it was about time to show myself a man. But she trembled, got up, ran and hid behind a wardrobe, crying out: 'Oh! don't look at me; no! no! If only you did not see me, if we were only in the dark! I am ashamed in the light. Cannot you imagine it? What a dreadful dream! Oh! this light, this light!'

"I rushed to the window; I closed the outside shutters, drew the curtains, and hung a coat over a ray of light that peeped in; and then, stretching out my hands, so as not to fall over the chairs, with my heart beating, I felt for her, and found her.

"It was a fresh journey for the two of us, then, groping our way, with our hands clasped. I don't suppose we went straight; for, first of all, I knocked against the mantelpiece, and then against a chest of drawers, before finding the lounge. As we sat down beside each other, I forgot everything, and we almost went to sleep in each other's arms.

"I was half dreaming; but, in my dream, I fancied that some one was calling me and crying for help; then I received a violent blow, and opened my eyes.

"'O——h!' The setting sun, magnificent and red, shone full into the room through the door,

which was wide open, and seemed to look at us from the verge of the horizon, illuminating us both, especially my companion, who was screaming, struggling, and twisting, and trying with hands and feet to get under the lounge, while, in the middle of the room, stood my landlord by the side of the concierge and a chimney-sweep, as black as the devil, who were looking at us with stupid eyes.

"I stood up in a rage, ready to jump at his throat, and shouted:

"'What the deuce are you doing in my room?'

"The chimney-sweep laughed so that he let his brush fall to the floor. The porter looked as if he were going out of his mind, and the landlord stammered:

"'But, Monsieur, it was—it was—about the chimney—the chimney, the chimney, which——'

"'Go to the devil!' I roared. So he took off his hat, which he had kept on in his confusion, and said, in a confused but very civil manner:

"'I beg your pardon, Monsieur; if I had known, I should not have disturbed you; I should not have come. The concierge told me you had gone out. Pray excuse me.' And they all went out.

"Ever since that time, I never draw the curtains, but am always very careful to lock the door."

# THE FATHER

## I

HE was a clerk in the Bureau of Public Education, and lived at Batignolles. He took the omnibus to Paris every morning, and always sat opposite a girl, with whom he fell in love.

She was employed in a shop, and went in at the same time every day. She was a little brunette, one of those girls whose eyes are so dark that they look like black spots on a complexion like ivory. He always saw her coming at the corner of the same street, and she generally had to run to catch the heavy vehicle, and sprang upon the steps before the horses had quite stopped. Then she got inside, out of breath, and, sitting down, looked round her.

The first time that he saw her, François Tessier

liked the face. One sometimes meets a woman whom one longs to clasp in one's arms without even knowing her. That girl seemed to respond to some chord in his being, to that sort of ideal of love which one cherishes in the depths of the heart, without knowing it.

He looked at her intently, not meaning to be rude, and she became embarrassed, and blushed. He noticed it, and tried to turn away his eyes; but he involuntarily fixed them upon her again every moment, although he tried to look in another direction; and, in a few days, they seemed to know each other without having spoken. He gave up his place to her when the omnibus was full, and got outside, though he was very sorry to do it. By this time, she had got so far as to greet him with a little smile; and, although she always dropped her eyes under his looks, which she felt were too ardent, yet she did not appear offended at being looked at in such a manner.

They ended by speaking. A kind of rapid friendship had become established between them, a daily freemasonry of half an hour, and that was certainly one of the most charming half hours in his life, to him. He thought of her all the rest of the day, saw her image continually during the long office hours. He was haunted and bewitched by that floating and yet tenacious recollection which the form of a beloved woman leaves in us, and it seemed to him that if he could win that little person it would be maddening happiness to him, almost above human realization.

Every morning she now shook hands with him, and he preserved the sense of that touch, and the recollection of the gentle pressure of her little fingers

until the next day, and he almost fancied that he preserved the imprint on his palm. He anxiously waited for this short omnibus ride, while Sundays seemed to him heartbreaking days. However, there was no doubt that she loved him, for one Saturday, in spring, she promised to go and lunch with him at Maison-Laffitte the next day.

## II

She was at the railway station first, which surprised him, but she said: "Before going, I want to speak to you. We have twenty minutes, and that is more than I shall take for what I have to say."

She trembled as she hung on his arm, and looked down, her cheeks pale, as she continued: "I do not want you to be deceived in me, and I shall not go there with you, unless you promise, unless you swear—not to do—not to do anything—that is at all improper."

She had suddenly become as red as a poppy, and said no more. He did not know what to reply, for he was happy and disappointed at the same time. He should love her less, certainly, if he knew that her conduct was light, but then it would be so charming, so delicious to have a little flirtation.

As he did not say anything, she began to speak again in an agitated voice, and with tears in her eyes. "If you do not promise to respect me altogether, I shall return home." And so he squeezed her arm tenderly and replied: "I promise, you shall only do what you like." She appeared relieved in mind, and asked, with a smile: "Do you really mean it?" And he looked into her eyes, and

replied: "I swear it." "Now you may take the tickets," she said.

During the journey, they could hardly speak, as the carriage was full, and when they reached Maison-Laffitte they went toward the Seine. The sun, which shone full on the river, on the leaves and the grass, seemed to be reflected in their hearts, and they went, hand in hand, along the bank, looking at the shoals of little fish swimming near the bank, and they walked on, brimming over with happiness, as if they were walking on air.

At last she said: "How foolish you must think me!"

"Why?" he asked. "To come out like this, all alone with you." "Certainly not; it is quite natural." "No, no; it is not natural for me—because I do not wish to commit a fault, and yet this is how girls fall. But if you only knew how wretched it is, every day the same thing, every day in the month, and every month in the year. I live quite alone with mamma, and as she has had a great deal of trouble, she is not very cheerful. I do the best I can, and try to laugh in spite of everything, but I do not always succeed. But, all the same, it was wrong in me to come, though you, at any rate, will not be sorry."

By way of an answer, he kissed her ardently on the ear that was nearest him, but she moved from him with an abrupt movement, and, getting suddenly angry, exclaimed: "Oh! Monsieur François, after what you swore to me!" And they went back to Maison-Laffitte.

They had lunch at the Petit-Havre, a low house, buried under four enormous poplar trees, by the side of the river. The air, the heat, the weak white

wine, and the sensation of being so close together, made them silent; their faces were flushed, and they had a feeling of oppression; but, after the coffee, they regained their high spirits, and, having crossed the Seine, started off along the bank, toward the village of La Frette. Suddenly he asked: "What is your name?" "Louise." "Louise," he repeated, and said nothing more.

The girl picked daisies, and made them into a great bunch, while he sang vigorously, as unrestrained as a colt that has been turned into a meadow. On their left, a vine-covered slope followed the river. François stopped motionless with astonishment: "Oh, look there!" he said.

The vines had come to an end, and the whole slope was covered with lilac bushes in flower. It was a purple wood! A kind of great carpet of flowers stretched over the earth, reaching as far as the village, more than two miles off. She also stood, surprised and delighted, and murmured: "Oh! how pretty!" And, crossing a meadow, they ran toward that curious low hill, which, every year, furnishes all the lilac that is drawn through Paris on the carts of the flower venders.

There was a narrow path beneath the trees, so they took it, and when they came to a small clearing, sat down.

Swarms of flies were buzzing around them and making a continuous, gentle sound, and the sun, the bright sun of a perfectly still day, shone over the green slopes, and from that forest of blossoms a powerful fragrance was borne toward them, a breath of perfume, the breath of the flowers.

A church clock struck in the distance, and they embraced gently, then, without the knowledge of

anything but that kiss, lay down on the grass. But she soon came to herself with the feeling of a great misfortune, and began to cry and sob with grief, with her face buried in her hands.

He tried to console her, but she wanted to start to return and to go home immediately; and she kept saying, as she walked along quickly: "Good heavens! good heavens!" He said to her: "Louise! Louise! Please let us stop here." But now her cheeks were red, and her eyes hollow, and, as soon as they got to the railway station in Paris, she left him, without even saying good-by.

## III

When he met her in the omnibus, next day, she appeared to him to be changed and thinner, and she said to him: "I want to speak to you; we will get down at the Boulevard."

As soon as they were on the pavement, she said: "We must bid each other good-by; I cannot meet you again." "But why?" he asked. "Because I cannot; I have been culpable, and I will not be so again."

Then he implored her, tortured by his love; but she replied firmly: "No, I cannot, I cannot." He, however, only grew all the more excited, and promised to marry her, but she said again: "No," and left him.

For a week he did not see her. He could not manage to meet her, and, as he did not know her address, he thought that he had lost her altogether. On the ninth day, however, there was a ring at his bell, and when he opened the door, she was there.

She threw herself into his arms, and did not resist any longer, and for three months they were close friends. He was beginning to grow tired of her, when she whispered to him; and then he had one idea and wish: to break with her at any price. As, however, he could not do that, not knowing how to begin, or what to say, full of anxiety through fear of the consequences of his rash indiscretion, he took a decisive step: one night he changed his lodgings, and disappeared.

The blow was so heavy that she did not look for the man who had abandoned her, but threw herself at her mother's knees, and confessed her misfortune; and, some months after, gave birth to a boy.

## IV

Years passed, and François Tessier grew old, without there having been any alteration in his life. He led the dull, monotonous life of an office clerk, without hope and without expectation. Every day he got up at the same time, went through the same streets, went through the same door, past the same porter, went into the same office, sat in the same chair, and did the same work. He was alone in the world, alone during the day in the midst of his different colleagues, and alone at night in his bachelor's lodgings; and he laid by a hundred francs a month, against old age.

Every Sunday he went to the Champs-Elysées, to watch the elegant people, the carriages, and the pretty women; and the next day he used to say to one of his colleagues: "The return of the carriages from the Bois du Boulogne was very brilliant yes-

terday." One fine Sunday morning, however, he went into the Parc Monceau, where the mothers and nurses, sitting on the sides of the walks, watched the children playing, and suddenly François Tessier started. A woman passed by, holding two children by the hand, a little boy of about ten and a little girl of four. It was she.

He walked another hundred yards, and then fell into a chair, choking with emotion. She had not recognized him, and so he came back, wishing to see her again. She was sitting down now, and the boy was standing by her side very quietly, while the little girl was making sand castles. It was she, it was certainly she, but she had the reserved appearance of a lady, was dressed simply, and looked self-possessed and dignified. He looked at her from a distance, for he did not venture to go near; but the little boy raised his head, and François Tessier felt himself tremble. It was his own son, there could be no doubt of that. And, as he looked at him, he thought he could recognize himself as he appeared in an old photograph taken years ago. He remained hidden behind a tree, waiting for her to go, that he might follow her.

He did not sleep that night. The idea of the child especially harassed him. His son! Oh! If he could only have known, have been sure! But what could he have done? However, he went to the house where she had lived, and asked about her. He was told that a neighbor, an honorable man of strict morals, had been touched by her distress, and had married her; he knew the fault she had committed and had married her, and had even recognized the child, his, François Tessier's child, as his own.

He returned to the Parc Monceau every Sunday, for then he always saw her, and each time he was seized with a mad, an irresistible longing to take his son into his arms, cover him with kisses, and to steal him, to carry him off.

He suffered horribly in his wretched isolation as an old bachelor, with nobody to care for him, and he also suffered atrocious mental torture, torn by paternal tenderness springing from remorse, longing, and jealousy, and from that need of loving one's own children which nature has implanted in all. At last, he determined to make a despairing attempt, and, going up to her, as she entered the park, he said, standing in the middle of the path, pale and with trembling lips: "You do not recognize me." She raised her eyes, looked at him, uttered an exclamation of horror, of terror, and, taking the two children by the hand, she rushed away, dragging them after her, while he went home and wept inconsolably.

Months passed without his seeing her again, but he suffered, day and night, for he was a prey to his paternal love. He would gladly have died, if he could only have kissed his son; he would have committed murder, performed any task, braved any danger, ventured anything. He wrote to her, but she did not reply, and, after writing her some twenty letters, he saw that there was no hope of altering her determination, and then he formed the desperate resolution of writing to her husband, being quite prepared to receive a bullet from a revolver, if need be. His letter only consisted of a few lines, as follows:

"MONSIEUR: You must have a perfect horror of my name, but I am so wretched, so overcome by misery, that my

only hope is in you, and, therefore, I venture to request you to grant me an interview of only five minutes.

"I have the honor, etc."

The next day he received the reply:

"MONSIEUR: I shall expect you to-morrow, Tuesday, at five o'clock."

## V

As he went up the staircase, François Tessier's heart beat so violently that he had to stop several times. There was a dull and violent thumping noise in his breast, as of some animal galloping; and he could breathe only with difficulty, and had to hold on to the banisters, in order not to fall.

He rang the bell on the third floor, and when a maidservant had opened the door, he asked: "Does Monsieur Flamel live here?" "Yes, Monsieur. Kindly come in."

He was shown into the drawing-room; he was alone, and waited, feeling bewildered, as in the midst of a catastrophe, until a door opened, and a man came in. He was tall, serious, and rather stout, and wore a black frock coat, and pointed to a chair with his hand. François Tessier sat down, and then said, with choking breath: "Monsieur—Monsieur—I do not know whether you know my name—whether you know——"

Monsieur Flamel interrupted him. "You need not tell it me, Monsieur, I know it. My wife has spoken to me about you." He spoke in the dignified tone of voice of a good man who wishes to be severe, and with the commonplace stateliness of an honorable man, and François Tessier continued:

"Well, Monsieur, I want to say that: I am dying of grief, of remorse, of shame, and I would like once, only once to kiss—the child."

Monsieur Flamel got up and rang the bell, and, when the servant came in, he said: "Will you bring Louis here." When she had gone out, they remained face to face, without speaking, as they had nothing more to say to one another, and waited. Then, suddenly, a little boy of ten rushed into the room, and ran up to the man whom he believed to be his father; but he stopped when he saw the stranger, and Monsieur Flamel kissed him, and said: "Now, go and kiss that gentleman, my dear." And the child went up to the stranger and looked at him.

François Tessier had risen. He let his hat fall, and was ready to fall himself as he looked at his son, while Monsieur Flamel had turned away, from a feeling of delicacy, and was looking out of the window.

The child waited in surprise, but he picked up the hat and gave it to the stranger. Then François, taking the child up in his arms, began to kiss him wildly all over his face; on his eyes, his cheeks, his mouth, his hair; and the youngster, frightened at the shower of kisses, tried to avoid them, turned away his head, and pushed away the man's face with his little hands. But suddenly François Tessier put him down, and cried: "Good-by! Good-by!" And he rushed out of the room as if he had been a thief.

# THE FALSE GEMS

MONSIEUR LANTIN had met the young girl at a reception at the house of the second head of his department, and had fallen head over heels in love with her.

She was the daughter of a provincial tax collector, who had been dead several years. She and her mother came to live in Paris, where the latter, who made the acquaintance of some of the families in her neighborhood, hoped to find a husband for her daughter.

They had very moderate means, and were honorable, gentle, and quiet.

The young girl was a perfect type of the virtuous woman into whose hands every sensible young man dreams of one day intrusting his happiness. Her simple beauty had the charm of angelic modesty, and the imperceptible smile which constantly hovered about her lips seemed to be the reflection of a pure and lovely soul. Her praises resounded

on every side. People never tired of repeating: "Happy the man who wins her love! He could not find a better wife."

Monsieur Lantin, then chief clerk in the Department of the Interior, enjoyed a snug little salary of three thousand five hundred francs, and he proposed to this model young girl, and was accepted.

He was unspeakably happy with her. She governed his household with such clever economy that they seemed to live in luxury. She lavished the most delicate attentions on her husband, coaxed and fondled him; and so great was her charm that six years after their marriage, Monsieur Lantin discovered that he loved his wife even more than during the first days of their honeymoon.

He found fault with only two of her tastes: Her love for the theater, and her taste for imitation jewelry. Her friends (the wives of some petty officials) frequently procured for her a box at the theater, often for the first representations of the new plays; and her husband was obliged to accompany her, whether he wished it or not, to these entertainments, which bored him excessively after his day's work at the office.

After a time, Monsieur Lantin begged his wife to request some lady of her acquaintance to accompany her, and to bring her home after the theater. She opposed this arrangement, at first; but, after much persuasion, finally consented, to the infinite delight of her husband.

Now, with her love for the theater, came also the desire for ornaments. Her costumes remained as before, simple, in good taste, and always modest; but she soon began to adorn her ears with huge rhinestones, which glittered and sparkled like real

diamonds. Around her neck she wore strings of false pearls, on her arms bracelets of imitation gold, and combs set with glass jewels.

Her husband frequently remonstrated with her, saying:

"My dear, as you cannot afford to buy real jewelry, you ought to appear adorned with your beauty and modesty alone, which are the rarest ornaments of your sex."

But she would smile sweetly, and say:

"What can I do? I am so fond of jewelry. It is my only weakness. We cannot change our natures."

Then she would roll around her fingers the pearl necklace, make the facets of the crystal gems sparkle, and say:

"Look! are they not lovely? One would swear they were real."

Monsieur Lantin would then answer, smilingly:

"You have bohemian tastes, my dear."

Sometimes, of an evening, when they were enjoying a *tête-à-tête* by the fireside, she would place on the tea-table the morocco leather box containing the "trash," as Monsieur Lantin called it. She would examine the false gems with a passionate attention, as though they imparted some deep and secret joy; and she often persisted in passing a necklace around her husband's neck, and, laughing heartily, would exclaim: "How droll you look!" Then she would throw herself into his arms, and kiss him affectionately.

One evening, in winter, she had been to the opera, and returned home chilled through and through. The next morning she coughed, and eight days later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

Monsieur Lantin's despair was so great that his hair became white in one month. He wept unceasingly; his heart was broken as he remembered her smile, her voice, every charm of his dead wife.

Time did not assuage his grief. Often, during office hours, while his colleagues were discussing the topics of the day, his eyes would suddenly fill with tears, and he would give vent to his grief in heart-rending sobs. Everything in his wife's room remained as it was during her lifetime; all her furniture, even her clothing, being left as it was on the day of her death. Here he was wont to seclude himself daily and think of her who had been his treasure —the joy of his existence.

But life soon became a struggle. His income, which, in the hands of his wife, covered all household expenses, was now no longer sufficient for his own immediate wants; and he wondered how she could have managed to buy such excellent wine and rare delicacies, which he could no longer procure with his modest resources.

He incurred some debts, and was soon reduced to absolute poverty. One morning, finding himself without a cent in his pocket, he resolved to sell something, and immediately the thought occurred to him of disposing of his wife's paste jewels, for he cherished in his heart a sort of rancor against these "deceptions," which had always irritated him in the past. The very sight of them spoiled, somewhat, the memory of his lost darling.

To the last days of her life she had continued to make purchases, bringing home new gems almost every evening, and he turned them over some time before finally deciding to sell the heavy necklace, which she seemed to prefer, and which, he thought,

ought to be worth about six or seven francs; for it was of very fine workmanship, though only imitation.

He put it in his pocket, and started out in search of what seemed a reliable jeweler's shop. At length he found one, and went in, feeling a little ashamed to expose his misery, and also to offer such a worthless article for sale.

"Sir," said he to the merchant, "I would like to know what this is worth."

The man took the necklace, examined it, called his clerk, and made some remarks in an undertone; he then put the ornament back on the counter, and looked at it from a distance to judge of the effect.

Monsieur Lantin, annoyed at all these ceremonies, was on the point of saying: "Oh! I know well enough it is not worth anything," when the jeweler said: "Sir, that necklace is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs; but I could not buy it unless you can tell me exactly where it came from."

The widower opened his eyes wide and remained gaping, not comprehending the merchant's meaning. Finally he stammered: "You say—are you sure?" The other replied, dryly: "You can search elsewhere, and see if any one will offer you more. I consider it worth fifteen thousand at the most. Come back here, if you cannot do better."

Monsieur Lantin, beside himself with astonishment, took up the necklace and left the store. He wished time for reflection.

Once outside, he felt inclined to laugh, and said to himself: "The fool! Oh, the fool! Had I only taken him at his word! That jeweler cannot distinguish real diamonds from the imitation article."

A few minutes after, he entered another store, in the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the proprietor glanced at the necklace, he cried out:

"Ah, *parbleu!* I know it well; it was bought here."

Monsieur Lantin, greatly disturbed, asked:

"How much is it worth?"

"Well, I sold it for twenty thousand francs. I am willing to take it back for eighteen thousand, when you inform me, according to our legal formality, how it came to be in your possession."

This time, Monsieur Lantin was dumfounded. He replied:

"But—but—examine it well. Until this moment I was under the impression that it was imitation."

The jeweler asked:

"What is your name, sir?"

"Lantin—I am in the employ of the Minister of the Interior. I live at number sixteen Rue des Martyrs."

The merchant looked through his books, found the entry, and said: "That necklace was sent to Madame Lantin's address, sixteen Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The two men looked into each other's eyes—the widower speechless with astonishment; the jeweler scenting a thief. The latter broke the silence.

"Will you leave this necklace here for twenty-four hours?" said he; "I will give you a receipt."

Monsieur Lantin answered hastily: "Yes, certainly." Then, putting the ticket in his pocket, he left the store.

He wandered aimlessly through the streets, his mind in a state of dreadful confusion. He tried to

reason, to understand. His wife could not afford to purchase such a costly ornament. Certainly not. But, then, it must have been a present!—a present! —a present, from whom? Why was it given to her?

He stopped, and remained standing in the middle of the street. A horrible doubt entered his mind—She? Then, all the other jewels must have been presents, too! The earth seemed to tremble beneath him—the tree before him to be falling; he threw up his arms, and fell to the ground, unconscious. He recovered his senses in a pharmacy, into which the passers-by had borne him. He asked to be taken home, and, when he reached the house, he shut himself up in his room, and wept until nightfall. Finally, overcome with fatigue, he went to bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

The sun awoke him next morning, and he began to dress slowly to go to the office. It was hard to work after such shocks. He sent a letter to his employer, requesting to be excused. Then he remembered that he had to return to the jeweler's. He did not like the idea; but he could not leave the necklace with that man. He dressed and went out.

It was a lovely day; a clear, blue sky smiled on the busy city below. Men of leisure were strolling about with their hands in their pockets.

Monsieur Lantin, observing them, said to himself: "The rich, indeed, are happy. With money it is possible to forget even the deepest sorrow. One can go where one pleases, and in travel find that distraction which is the surest cure for grief. Oh! if I were only rich!"

He perceived that he was hungry, but his pocket

was empty. He again remembered the necklace. Eighteen thousand francs! Eighteen thousand francs! What a sum!

He soon arrived in the Rue de la Paix, opposite the jeweler's. Eighteen thousand francs! Twenty times he resolved to go in, but shame kept him back. He was hungry, however—very hungry—and not a cent in his pocket. He decided quickly, ran across the street, in order not to have time for reflection, and rushed into the store.

The proprietor immediately came forward, and politely offered him a chair; the clerks glanced at him knowingly.

"I have made inquiries, Monsieur Lantin," said the jeweler, "and if you are still resolved to dispose of the gems, I am ready to pay you the price I offered."

"Certainly, sir," stammered Monsieur Lantin.

Whereupon the proprietor took from a drawer eighteen large bills, counted, and handed them to Monsieur Lantin, who signed a receipt; and, with trembling hand, put the money into his pocket.

As he was about to leave the store, he turned toward the merchant, who still wore the same knowing smile, and, lowering his eyes, said:

"I have—I have other gems, which came from the same source. Will you buy them, also?"

The merchant bowed: "Certainly, sir."

Monsieur Lantin said gravely: "I will bring them to you." An hour later, he returned with the gems.

The large diamond earrings were worth twenty thousand francs; the bracelets, thirty-five thousand; the rings, sixteen thousand; a set of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand; a gold chain with soli-

taire pendant, forty thousand—making the sum of one hundred and forty-three thousand francs.

The jeweler remarked, jokingly:

"There was a person who invested all her savings in precious stones."

Monsieur Lantin replied, seriously:

"It is only another way of investing one's money."

That day he lunched at Voisin's, and drank wine worth twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and made a tour of the Bois. He gazed at the various turnouts with a kind of disdain, and could hardly refrain from crying out to the occupants:

"I, too, am rich!—I am worth two hundred thousand francs."

Suddenly he thought of his employer. He drove up to the bureau, and entered gayly, saying:

"Sir, I have come to resign my position. I have just inherited three hundred thousand francs."

He shook hands with his former colleagues, and confided to them some of his projects for the future; he then went off to dine at the Café Anglais.

He seated himself beside a gentleman of aristocratic bearing; and, during the meal, informed the latter confidentially that he had just inherited a fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

For the first time in his life, he was not bored at the theater, and spent the remainder of the night in a gay frolic.

Six months afterward, he married again. His second wife was a very virtuous woman; but had a violent temper. She caused him much sorrow.

# THE STORY OF A FARM GIRL

## I

AS the weather was very fine, the people on the farm had hurried through their dinner and had returned to the fields.

The servant, Rose, remained alone in the large kitchen, where the fire was dying out on the hearth beneath the large boiler of hot water. From time to time, she dipped out some water, and slowly washed her dishes, stopping occasionally to look at the two streaks of light which the sun threw across the long table through the window, and which showed the defects in the glass.

Three venturesome hens were picking up the crumbs under the chairs, while the smell of the poultry-yard and the warmth from the cow-stall came in through the half-open door, and a cock was heard crowing in the distance.

When she had finished her work, wiped down the

table, dusted the mantelpiece, and put the plates on the high dresser close to the wooden clock with its loud tick-tack, she drew a long breath, as she felt rather oppressed, without exactly knowing why. She looked at the black clay walls, the rafters that were blackened with smoke, and from which hung spiders' webs, smoked herrings, and strings of onions; and then she sat down, rather overcome by the stale odor from the earthen floor, on which so many things had been continually spilt, and which the heat brought out. With this, there was mingled the sour smell of the pans of milk which were set out to raise the cream in the adjoining dairy.

She wanted to sew, as usual, but she did not feel strong enough, and so she went to the door to get a mouthful of fresh air, which seemed to do her good.

The fowls were lying on the steaming dunghill; some of them were scratching with one claw in search of worms, while the cock stood up proudly in their midst. When he crowed, the cocks in all the neighboring farmyards replied to him, as if they were uttering challenges from farm to farm.

The girl looked at them without thinking, and then she raised her eyes, and was almost dazzled at the sight of the apple trees in blossom. Just then, a colt, full of life and friskiness, jumped over the ditches, and then stopped suddenly, as if surprised at being alone.

She, also, felt inclined to run; she felt inclined to move and to stretch her limbs, and to repose in the warm, breathless air. She took a few undecided steps, and closed her eyes, for she was seized with a feeling of animal comfort; and then she went to look for eggs in the hen-loft. There were thirteen of them, which she took in and put into the store-

room; but the smell from the kitchen annoyed her again, and she went out to sit on the grass.

The farmyard, which was surrounded by trees, seemed to be asleep. The tall grass, amid which the tall, yellow dandelions rose up like streaks of yellow light, was of a vivid, fresh spring green. The apple trees cast their shade all round them, and the thatched roofs, on which grew blue and yellow irises, with their swordlike leaves, steamed as if the moisture of the stables and barns were coming through the straw.

The girl went to the shed, where the carts and buggies were kept. Close to it, in a ditch, there was a large patch of violets, whose fragrance was spread abroad, while, beyond the slope, the open country could be seen, where grain was growing, with clumps of trees in places, and groups of laborers here and there, who looked as small as dolls, and white horses like toys, who were drawing a child's cart, driven by a man as tall as one's finger.

She took up a bundle of straw, threw it into the ditch, and sat down upon it; then, not feeling comfortable, she undid it, spread it out, and lay down upon it at full length, on her back, with both arms under her head, and her legs stretched out.

Gradually her eyes closed, and she was falling into a state of delightful languor. She was, in fact, almost asleep, when she felt two hands on her bosom, and she sprang up at a bound. It was Jacques, one of the farm laborers, a tall fellow from Picardy, who had been making love to her for a long time. He had been herding the sheep, and, seeing her lying down in the shade, had come up stealthily and holding his breath, with glistening eyes, and bits of straw in his hair.

He tried to kiss her, but she gave him a smack in the face, for she was as strong as he, and he was shrewd enough to beg her pardon; so they sat down side by side, and talked amicably. They spoke about the favorable weather, of their master, who was a good fellow, then of their neighbors, of all the people in the country round, of themselves, of their village, of their youthful days, of their recollections, of their relations, who had left them for a long time, and it might be forever. She grew sad, as she thought of it, while he, with one fixed idea in his head, drew closer to her.

"I have not seen my mother for a long time," she said. "It is very hard to be separated like that"—and she directed her looks into the distance, toward the village in the north which she had left.

Suddenly, however, he seized her by the neck and kissed her again; but she struck him so violently in the face with her clinched fist that his nose began to bleed, and he got up and laid his head against the trunk of a tree. When she saw that, she was sorry, and, going up to him, she said: "Have I hurt you?" He, however, only laughed. "No, it was a mere nothing; only you struck me right on the middle of the nose. What a devil!" he said, and he looked at her with admiration, for she had inspired him with a feeling of respect, and of a very different kind of admiration, which was the beginning of a real love for that tall, strong wench.

When the bleeding had stopped, he proposed a walk, as he was afraid of his neighbor's heavy hand, if they remained side by side like that much longer; but she took his arm of her own accord, in the avenue, as if they had been out for an evening walk, and said: "It is not nice of you to despise me like

that, Jacques." He protested, however. No, he did not despise her. He was in love with her, that was all. "So you really want to marry me?" she asked.

He hesitated, and then looked at her sideways, while she looked straight ahead of her. She had fat, red cheeks, a full bust beneath her cotton jacket;

thick, red lips; and her neck, which was almost bare, was covered with small beads of perspiration. He felt a fresh access of desire, and, putting his lips to her ear, he murmured: "Yes, of course, I do."

Then she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him till they were both out of breath. From that moment the eternal story of love began between them. They plagued one another in corners;

they met in the moonlight beside the haystack, and gave each other bruises on the legs, under the table, with their heavy nailed boots. By degrees, however, Jacques seemed to grow tired of her; he avoided her, scarcely spoke to her, and did not try any longer to meet her alone, which made her sad and anxious; and soon she found that she was *enceinte.*

At first, she was in a state of consternation, but then she got angry, and her rage increased every day because she could not meet him, as he avoided her most carefully. At last, one night, when every one in the farmhouse was asleep, she went out noiselessly in her petticoat, with bare feet, crossed the yard, and opened the door of the stable where Jacques was lying in a large box of straw above his horses. He pretended to snore when he heard her coming, but she knelt down by his side, and shook him until he sat up.

"What do you want?" he then asked her. And with clinched teeth, and trembling with anger, she replied: "I want—I want you to marry me, as you promised." But he only laughed, and replied: "Oh! if a man were to marry all the girls with whom he has made a slip, he would have more than enough to do."

Then she seized him by the throat, threw him on his back, so that he could not get away from her, and, half strangling him, she shouted into his face: "I am *enceinte,* do you hear? I am *enceinte!*"

He gasped for breath, as he was almost choked, and so they remained, both of them, motionless and without speaking, in the dark silence, which was only broken by the noise made by a horse as he pulled the hay out of the manger and then slowly chewed it.

When Jacques found that she was the stronger, he stammered out: "Very well, I will marry you, as that is the case." But she did not believe his promises. "It must be at once," she said. "You must have the banns put up." "At once," he replied. "Swear solemnly that you will." He hesitated for a few moments, and then said: "I swear it, by Heaven."

Then she released her grasp, and went away without another word.

She had no chance of speaking to him for several days; and, as the stable was now always locked at night, she was afraid to make any noise, for fear of creating a scandal. One morning, however, she saw another man come in at dinner time, and she said: "Has Jacques left?" "Yes," the man replied; "I have got his place."

This made her tremble so violently that she could not take the saucepan off the fire; and, later, when they were all at work, she went up into her room and cried, burying her head in her bolster, so that she might not be heard. During the day, however, she tried to obtain some information without exciting any suspicion, but she was so overwhelmed by the thoughts of her misfortune that she fancied that all the people whom she asked laughed maliciously. All she learned, however, was that he had left the neighborhood altogether.

## II

Then a cloud of constant misery began for her. She worked mechanically, without thinking of what

she was doing, with one fixed idea in her head: "Suppose people were to know."

This continual feeling made her so incapable of reasoning that she did not even try to think of any means of avoiding the disgrace that she knew must ensue, which was irreparable and drawing nearer every day, and which was as sure as death itself. She got up every morning long before the others, and persistently tried to look at her figure in a piece of broken looking-glass, before which she did her hair, as she was very anxious to know whether anybody would notice a change in her, and, during the day, she stopped working every few minutes to look at herself from top to toe, to see whether her apron did not look too short.

The months went on, and she scarcely spoke now, and when she was asked a question, did not appear to understand; but she had a frightened look, haggard eyes, and trembling hands, which made her master say to her occasionally: "My poor girl, how stupid you have grown lately."

In church she hid behind a pillar, and no longer ventured to go to confession, as she feared to face the priest, to whom she attributed superhuman powers, which enabled him to read people's consciences; and, at meal times, the looks of her fellow servants almost made her faint with mental agony; and she was always fancying that she had been found out by the cowherd, a precocious and cunning little lad, whose bright eyes seemed always to be watching her.

One morning the postman brought her a letter; and, as she had never received one in her life before, she was so upset by it that she was obliged to sit down. Perhaps it was from him? But, as she

could not read, she sat anxious and trembling with that piece of paper, covered with ink, in her hand; after a time, however, she put it into her pocket, as she did not venture to confide her secret to any one. She often stopped in her work to look at those lines written at regular intervals, and which terminated in a signature, imagining vaguely that she would suddenly discover their meaning, until, at last, as she felt half mad with impatience and anxiety, she went to the schoolmaster, who told her to sit down, and read to her, as follows:

"My Dear Daughter: I write to tell you that I am very ill. Our neighbor, Monsieur Dentu, begs you to come, if you can.

"From your affectionate mother,

"Césaire Dentu, Deputy Mayor."

She did not say a word, and went away; but, as soon as she was alone, her legs gave way under her, and she fell down by the roadside, and remained there till night.

When she got back, she told the farmer her bad news, and he allowed her to go home for as long as she liked, and promised to have her work done by a charwoman, and to take her back when she returned.

Her mother died soon after she got there, and the next day Rose gave birth to a seven-months child, a miserable little skeleton, thin enough to make anybody shudder, and which seemed to be suffering continually, to judge from the painful manner in which it moved its poor little hands, which were as thin as a crab's legs; but it lived, for all that. She said she was married, but could not be burdened with the child, so she left it with some

neighbors, who promised to take great care of it, and she went back to the farm.

But now in her heart, which had been wounded so long, there arose something like brightness, an unknown love for that frail little creature which she had left behind her, though there was fresh suffering in that very love, suffering which she felt every hour and every minute, because she was parted from her child. What pained her most, however, was the mad longing to kiss it, to press it in her arms, to feel the warmth of its little body against her breast. She could not sleep at night; she thought of it the whole day long, and in the evening, when her work was done, she would sit in front of the fire and gaze at it intently, as people do whose thoughts are far away.

They began to talk about her, and to tease her about her lover. They asked her whether he was tall, handsome, and rich. When was the wedding to be, and the christening? And often she ran away, to cry by herself, for these questions seemed to hurt her, like the prick of a pin; and, in order to forget their jokes, she began to work still more energetically, and, still thinking of her child, she sought some way of saving up money for it, and determined to work so that her master would be obliged to raise her wages.

By degrees, she almost monopolized the work, and persuaded him to get rid of one servant girl, who had become useless since she had taken to working like two; she economized in the bread, oil, and candles; in the corn, which they gave to the chickens too extravagantly, and in the fodder for the horses and cattle, which was rather wasted. She was as miserly about her master's money as if it

had been her own; and, by dint of making good bargains, of getting high prices for all their produce, and by baffling the peasants' tricks when they offered anything for sale, he, at last, intrusted her with buying and selling everything, with the direction of all the laborers, and with the purchase of provisions necessary for the household; so that, in a short time, she became indispensable to him. She kept such a strict eye on everything about her that, under her direction, the farm prospered wonderfully, and for five miles round people talked of "Master Vallin's servant," and the farmer himself said everywhere: "That girl is worth more than her weight in gold."

But time passed by, and her wages remained the same. Her hard work was accepted as something that was due from every good servant, and as a mere token of good will; and she began to think rather bitterly that if the farmer could put fifty or a hundred crowns extra into the bank every month, thanks to her, she was still only earning her two hundred francs a year, neither more nor less; and so she made up her mind to ask for an increase of wages. She went to see the schoolmaster three times about it, but when she got there, she spoke about something else. She felt a kind of modesty in asking for money, as if it were something disgraceful; but, at last, one day, when the farmer was having breakfast by himself in the kitchen, she said to him, with some embarrassment, that she wished to speak to him particularly. He raised his head in surprise, with both his hands on the table, holding his knife, with its point in the air, in one, and a piece of bread in the other, and he looked fixedly at the girl, who felt uncomfortable under his gaze,

but asked for a week's holiday, so that she might get away, as she was not very well. He acceded to her request immediately, and then added, in some embarrassment himself:

"When you come back, I shall have something to say to you myself."

## III

The child was nearly eight months old, and she did not recognize it. It had grown rosy and chubby all over, like a little roll of fat. She threw herself on it, as if it had been some prey, and kissed it so violently that it began to scream with terror; and then she began to cry herself, because it did not know her, and stretched out its arms to its nurse as soon as it saw her. But the next day, it began to know her, and laughed when it saw her, and she took it into the fields, and ran about excitedly with it, and sat down under the shade of the trees; and then, for the first time in her life, she opened her heart to somebody, and told him her troubles; how hard her work was, her anxieties, and her hopes; and she quite tired the child with the violence of her caresses.

She took the greatest pleasure in handling it, in washing and dressing it, for it seemed to her that all this was the confirmation of her maternity, and she would look at it, almost feeling surprised that it was hers, and she would say to herself in a low voice, as she danced it in her arms: "It's my baby, it's my baby."

She cried all the way home, as she returned to the farm, and had scarcely got in before her master

called her into his room; and she went, feeling astonished and nervous, without knowing why.

"Sit down there," he said. She sat down, and for some moments they remained side by side, in some embarrassment, with their arms hanging at their sides, as if they did not know what to do with them, and looking each other in the face, after the manner of peasants.

The farmer, a stout, jovial, obstinate man of forty-five, who had lost two wives, evidently felt embarrassed, which was very unusual with him; but, at last, he made up his mind, and began to speak vaguely, hesitating a little, and looking out of the window as he talked. "How is it, Rose," he said, "that you have never thought of settling in life?" She grew as pale as death, and, seeing that she gave him no answer, he went on: "You are a good, steady, active, and economical girl; and a wife like you would make a man's fortune."

She did not move, but looked frightened; she did not even try to comprehend his meaning, for her thoughts were in a whirl, as if at the approach of some great danger; so, after waiting for a few seconds, he went on: "You see, a farm without a mistress can never succeed, even with a servant like you." Then he stopped, for he did not know what else to say, and Rose looked at him with the air of a person who thinks that he is face to face with a murderer, and ready to flee at the slightest movement he may make; but, after waiting for about five minutes, he asked her: "Well, will it suit you?" "Will what suit me, master?" And he said, quickly: "Why, to marry me, by Heaven!"

She jumped up, but fell back on her chair, as if she had been struck, and there she remained motion-

less, like a person who is overwhelmed by some great misfortune. At last, the farmer grew impatient, and said: "Come, what more do you want?" She looked at him, almost in terror; then, suddenly, the tears came into her eyes, and she said twice, in a choking voice: "I cannot, I cannot!" "Why not?" he asked. "Come, don't be silly; I will give you until to-morrow to think it over."

And he hurried out of the room, very glad to have got through with the matter, which had troubled him a good deal; for he had no doubt that she would the next morning accept a proposal which she could never have expected, and which would be a capital bargain for him, as he thus bound a woman to his interests who would certainly bring him more than if she had the best dowry in the district.

Neither could there be any scruples about an unequal match between them, for in the country every one is very nearly equal; the farmer works just as his laborers do, who frequently become masters in their turn, and the female servants constantly become the mistresses of the establishments without its making any change in their life or habits.

Rose did not go to bed that night. She threw herself, dressed as she was, on her bed, and she had not even the strength to cry left in her, she was so thoroughly dumfounded. She remained quite inert, scarcely knowing that she had a body, and without being at all able to collect her thoughts, though, at moments, she remembered something of what had happened, and then she was frightened at the idea of what might happen. Her terror increased, and every time the great kitchen clock struck the hour she broke out in a perspiration from grief. She became bewildered, and had the nightmare; her candle went

out, and then she began to imagine that some one had cast a spell over her, as country people so often imagine, and she felt a mad inclination to run away, to escape and to flee before her misfortune, like a ship scudding before the wind.

An owl hooted; she shivered, sat up, passed her hands over her face, her hair, and all over her body, and then she went downstairs, as if she were walking in her sleep. When she got into the yard she stooped down, so as not to be seen by any prowling scamp, for the moon, which was setting, shed a bright light over the fields. Instead of opening the gate she scrambled over the fence, and as soon as she was outside she started off. She went on straight before her, with a quick, springy trot, and from time to time she unconsciously uttered a piercing cry. Her long shadow accompanied her, and now and then some night bird flew over her head, while the dogs in the farmyards barked as they heard her pass; one even jumped over the ditch and followed her and tried to bite her, but she turned round at it and gave such a terrible yell that the frightened animal ran back and cowered in silence in its kennel.

The stars grew dim, and the birds began to twitter; day was breaking. The girl was worn out and panting; and when the sun rose in the purple sky she stopped, for her swollen feet refused to go any farther; but she saw a pond in the distance, a large pond whose stagnant water looked like blood under the reflection of this new day, and she limped on with short steps and her hand on her heart, in order to dip both her feet in it. She sat down on a tuft of grass, took off her heavy shoes, which were full of dust, pulled off her stockings and plunged her

legs into the still water, from which bubbles were rising here and there.

A feeling of delicious coolness pervaded her from head to foot, and suddenly, while she was looking fixedly at the deep pool, she was seized with dizziness, and with a mad longing to throw herself into it. All her sufferings would be over in there, over for ever. She no longer thought of her child; she only wanted peace, complete rest, and to sleep for ever, and she got up with raised arms and took two steps forward. She was in the water up to her thighs, and she was just about to throw herself in when sharp, pricking pains in her ankles made her jump back, and she uttered a cry of despair, for, from her knees to the tips of her feet, long black leeches were sucking her lifeblood, and were swelling as they adhered to her flesh. She did not dare to touch them, and screamed with horror, so that her cries of despair attracted a peasant, who was driving along at some distance, to the spot. He pulled off the leeches one by one, applied herbs to the wounds, and drove the girl to her master's farm in his gig.

She was in bed for a fortnight, and as she was sitting outside the door on the first morning that she got up, the farmer suddenly came and planted himself before her. "Well," he said, "I suppose the affair is settled, isn't it?" She did not reply at first, and then, as he remained standing and looking at her intently with his piercing eyes, she said with difficulty: "No, master, I cannot." He immediately flew into a rage.

"You cannot, girl; you cannot? I should just like to know the reason why?" She began to cry, and repeated: "I cannot." He looked at her, and

then exclaimed angrily: "Then I suppose you have a lover?" "Perhaps that is it," she replied, trembling with shame.

The man got as red as a poppy, and stammered out in a rage: "Ah! So you confess it, you slut! And pray who is the fellow? Some penniless, half-starved ragamuffin, without a roof to his head, I suppose? Who is it, I say?" And as she gave him no answer, he continued: "Ah! So you will not tell me. . . . Then I will tell you; it is Jean Bauda?" "No, not he," she exclaimed. "Then it is Pierre Martin?" "Oh! no, master."

And he angrily mentioned all the young fellows in the neighborhood, while she denied that he had hit upon the right one, and every moment wiped her eyes with the corner of her blue apron. But he still tried to find it out, with his brutish obstinacy, and, as it were, scratching at her heart to discover her secret, just as a terrier scratches at a hole to try and get at the animal which he scents inside it. Suddenly, however, the man shouted: "By George! It is Jacques, the man who was here last year. They used to say that you were always talking together, and that you thought about getting married."

Rose was choking, and she grew scarlet, while her tears suddenly stopped and dried up on her cheeks, like drops of water on hot iron, and she exclaimed: "No, it is not he, it is not he!" "Is that really a fact?" asked the cunning peasant, who partly guessed the truth; and she replied, hastily: "I will swear it; I will swear it to you. . . ." She tried to think of something by which to swear, as she did not venture to invoke sacred things, but he interrupted her: "At any rate, he used to fol-

low you into every corner and devoured you with his eyes at meal times. Did you ever give him your promise, eh? ''

This time she looked her master straight in the face. '' No, never, never; I will solemnly swear to you that if he were to come to-day and ask me to marry him I would have nothing to do with him.'' She spoke with such an air of sincerity that the farmer hesitated, and then he continued, as if speaking to himself: '' What, then? You have not had *a misfortune,* as they call it, or it would have been known, and as it has no consequences, no girl would refuse her master on that account. There must be something at the bottom of it, however.''

She could say nothing; she had not the strength to speak, and he asked her again: '' You will not? '' '' I cannot, master,'' she said, with a sigh, and he turned on his heel.

She thought she had got rid of him altogether and spent the rest of the day almost tranquilly, but was as exhausted as if she had been turning the thrashing-machine all day in the place of the old white horse, and she went to bed as soon as she could and fell asleep immediately. In the middle of the night, however, two hands touching the bed woke her. She trembled with fear, but immediately recognized the farmer's voice, when he said to her: '' Don't be frightened, Rose; I have come to speak to you.'' She was surprised at first, but when he tried to take liberties with her she understood and began to tremble violently, as she felt quite alone in the darkness, still heavy from sleep, and quite unprotected with that man standing near her. She certainly did not consent, but she resisted carelessly, struggling against that instinct which is

always strong in simple natures and very imperfectly protected by the undecided will of inert and gentle races. She turned her head to the wall, and now toward the room, in order to avoid the attentions which the farmer tried to press on her, but she was weakened by fatigue, while he became brutal, intoxicated by desire.

They lived together as man and wife, and one morning he said to her: "I have put up our banns, and we will get married next month."

She did not reply, for what could she say? She did not resist, for what could she do?

## IV

She married him. She felt as if she were in a pit with inaccessible sides from which she could never get out, and all kinds of misfortunes were hanging over her head, like huge rocks, which would fall on the first occasion. Her husband gave her the impression of a man whom she har robbed, and who would find it out some day or other. And then she thought of her child, who was the cause of her misfortunes, but who was also the cause of all her happiness on earth, and whom she went to see twice a year, though she came back more unhappy each time.

But she gradually grew accustomed to her life, her fears were allayed, her heart was at rest, and she lived with an easier mind, though still with some vague fear floating in it. And so years went on, until the child was six. She was almost happy now, when suddenly the farmer's temper grew very bad.

For two or three years he seemed to have been nursing some secret anxiety, to be troubled by some care, some mental disturbance, which was gradually increasing. He remained sitting at table after dinner, with his head in his hands, sad and devoured by sorrow. He always spoke hastily, sometimes even brutally, and it even seemed as if he had a grudge against his wife, for at times he answered her roughly, almost angrily.

One day, when a neighbor's boy came for some eggs, and she spoke rather crossly to him, as she was very busy, her husband suddenly came in and said to her in his unpleasant voice: "If that were your own child you would not treat him so." She was hurt and did not reply, and then she went back into the house, with all her grief awakened afresh; and at dinner the farmer neither spoke to her nor looked at her, and he seemed to hate her, to despise her, to know something about the affair at last. In consequence she lost her composure, and did not venture to remain alone with him after the meal was over, but left the room and hastened to the church.

It was getting dusk; the narrow nave was in total darkness, but she heard footsteps in the choir, for the sacristan was preparing the tabernacle lamp for the night. That spot of trembling light, which was lost in the darkness of the arches, looked to Rose like her last hope, and with her eyes fixed on it, she fell on her knees. The chain rattled as the little lamp swung up into the air, and almost immediately the small bell rang out the Angelus through the increasing mist. She went up to him, as he was going out.

"Is Monsieur le curé at home?" she asked.

"Of course he is; this is his dinner-time." She trembled as she rang the bell of the parsonage. The priest was just sitting down to dinner, and he made her sit down also. "Yes, yes, I know all about it; your husband has mentioned the matter to me that brings you here." The poor woman nearly fainted, and the priest continued: "What do you want, my child?" And he hastily swallowed several spoonfuls of soup, some of which dropped onto his greasy cassock. But Rose did not venture to say anything more, and she got up to go, but the priest said: "Courage. . . ."

And she went out and returned to the farm without knowing what she was doing. The farmer was waiting for her, as the laborers had gone away during her absence, and she fell heavily at his feet, and, shedding a flood of tears, she said to him: "What have you got against me?"

He began to shout and to swear: "What have I got against you? That I have no children, by ——. When a man takes a wife it is not that they may live alone together to the end of their days. That is what I have against you. When a cow has no calves she is not worth anything, and when a woman has no children she is also not worth anything."

She began to cry, and said: "It is not my fault! It is not my fault!" He grew rather more gentle when he heard that, and added: "I do not say that it is, but it is very provoking, all the same."

## V

From that day forward she had only one thought; to have a child, another child; she confided her wish to everybody, and, in consequence of this, a neighbor told her of an infallible method. This was, to make her husband drink a glass of water with a pinch of ashes in it every evening. The farmer consented to try it, bot without success; so they said to each other: "Perhaps there are some secret ways?" And they tried to find out. They were told of a shepherd who lived ten leagues off, and so Vallin one day drove off to consult him. The shepherd gave him a loaf on which he had made some marks; it was kneaded up with herbs, and each of them was to eat a piece of it, but they ate the whole loaf without obtaining any results from it.

Next, a schoolmaster unveiled mysteries and processes of love which were unknown in the country, but infallible, so he declared; but none of them had the desired effect. Then the priest advised them to make a pilgrimage to the shrine at Fécamp. Rose went with the crowd and prostrated herself in the abbey, and, mingling her prayers with the coarse desires of the peasants around her, she prayed that she might be fruitful a second time; but it was in vain, and then she thought that she was being punished for her first fault, and she was seized by terrible grief. She was wasting away with sorrow; her husband was also aging prematurely, and was wearing himself out in useless hopes.

Then war broke out between them; he called her names and beat her. They quarreled all day long,

and when they were in their room together at night he flung insults and obscenities at her, choking with rage, until one night, not being able to think of any means of making her suffer more, he ordered her to get up and go and stand out of doors in the rain until daylight. As she did not obey him, he seized her by the neck and began to strike her in the face with his fists, but she said nothing and did not move. In his exasperation he knelt on her stomach, and with clinched teeth, and mad with rage, he began to beat her. Then in her despair she rebelled, and flinging him against the wall with a furious gesture, she sat up, and in an altered voice she hissed: "I have had a child, I have had one! I had it by Jacques; you know Jacques. He promised to marry me, but he left this neighborhood without keeping his word."

The man was thunderstruck and could hardly speak, but at last he stammered out: "What are you saying? What are you saying?" Then she began to sob, and amid her tears she continued: "That was the reason why I did not want to marry you. I could not tell you, for you would have left me without any bread for my child. You have never had any children, so you cannot understand, you cannot understand!"

He said again, mechanically, with increasing surprise: "You have a child? You have a child?"

"You took me by force, as I suppose you know? I did not want to marry you," she said, still sobbing.

Then he got up, lit the candle, and began to walk up and down, with his arms behind him. She was cowering on the bed and crying, and suddenly he stopped in front of her, and said: "Then it is

my fault that you have no children?" She gave him no answer, and he began to walk up and down again, and then, stopping again, he continued: "How old is your child?" "Just six," she whispered. "Why did you not tell me about it?" he asked. "How could I?" she replied, with a sigh.

He remained standing, motionless. "Come, get up," he said. She got up with some difficulty, and then, when she was standing on the floor, he suddenly began to laugh with the hearty laugh of his good days, and, seeing how surprised she was, he added: "Very well, we will go and fetch the child, as you and I can have none together."

She was so scared that if she had had the strength she would assuredly have run away, but the farmer rubbed his hands and said: "I wanted to adopt one, and now we have found one. I asked the curé about an orphan some time ago."

Then, still laughing, he kissed his weeping and agitated wife on both cheeks, and shouted out, as though she could not hear him: "Come along, mother, we will go and see whether there is any soup left; I should not mind a plateful."

She put on her petticoat and they went downstairs; and while she was kneeling in front of the fireplace and lighting the fire under the saucepan, he continued to walk up and down the kitchen with long strides, repeating:

"Well, I am really glad of this; I am not saying it for form's sake, but I am glad, I am really very glad."

# THE CONSERVATORY

M AND MME. LEREBOUR were about the same age. But Monsieur looked younger, although he was more delicate than his wife. They lived near Mantes on a pretty estate which they had bought after having made a fortune by selling printed cottons.

The house was surrounded by a beautiful garden containing a poultry yard, Chinese kiosks, and a little conservatory at the end of the avenue. M. Lerebour was short, round, and jovial, with the joviality of a shopkeeper of epicurean tastes. His wife lean, self-willed, and always discontented, had not succeeded in conquering her husband's good humor. She dyed her hair, and sometimes read novels, which led her to dream, although she affected to despise such literature. People said she was a woman of strong passions without her having ever done anything to justify that opinion. But her husband sometimes said:

"My wife is a flirt," with a certain knowing air which gave rise to surmises.

For some years past, however, she had shown herself aggressive toward M. Lerebour, always irritated and hard, as if a secret and unavowable grief tormented her. A sort of misunderstanding was the result. They scarcely spoke to each other, and Madame, whose name was Palmyre, was incessantly heaping unkind compliments, wounding allusions, bitter words, without any apparent reason, on Monsieur, whose name was Gustave.

He endured it all, annoyed but cheerful as ever, endowed with such a fund of contentment that he put up with these domestic worries. He asked himself, nevertheless, what unknown cause could have thus embittered his spouse, for he had a strong feeling that her irritation had a secret cause, but so difficult to discover that it was time lost to try to do so.

He often said to her: "Look here, my dear, tell me what you have against me. I feel that you are concealing something."

She invariably replied: "I have nothing against you, positively nothing. Besides, if I had some cause for discontent, it would be for you to discover it. I don't like men who understand nothing, who are so soft and incapable that one must come to their assistance to make them grasp the slightest thing."

He murmured dejectedly: "I see clearly that you don't want to say anything."

And he went away still striving to unravel the mystery.

The nights especially became very painful to him; for they always shared the same bed, as one

does in good and simple households. It was not, therefore, mere ordinary ill-temper that she displayed toward him. She chose the moment when they were lying side by side to annoy him with the liveliest raillery. She reproached him principally with growing fat. "You take up all the room, you are growing so fat. And you perspire as if you were melted lard. Do you think that is agreeable to me?"

And she made him get up on the slightest pretext, sending him downstairs to get a newspaper she had forgotten, or a bottle of orange water, which he failed to find, as she had herself hidden it away. And she would exclaim in a furious and sarcastic tone: "You might, however, know where to find it, you big booby!" When he had been wandering about the quiet house for a whole hour, and returned to the room empty-handed, the only thanks she gave him was to say: "Come, get back to bed; it will make you thin to walk a little; you are becoming as flabby as a sponge."

She kept waking him every moment by complaining of cramps in her stomach, and insisted on his rubbing her stomach with flannel soaked in eau de Cologne. He did his utmost to cure her, grieved at seeing her ill; and he proposed to go and rouse up Céleste, their maid. Then she would get very angry, crying: "This fellow must be a fool. Well! it is over; I am better now, so go to sleep again, you big lout."

He asked, "Are you quite sure you are better?"

She replied harshly:

"Yes, hold your tongue! let me sleep! Don't worry me any more about it! You are incapable of doing anything, even of rubbing a woman."

He became worried: "But, my darling——"

She became exasperated, "I want no 'but.' Enough, isn't it? Give me some rest now."

And she turned her face to the wall.

One night she shook him so abruptly that he started up in terror, and found himself in a sitting posture with a rapidity that was not habitual.

He stammered, "What—what's the matter?"

She caught him by the arm and pinched him till he cried out. She gave him a box on the ear. "I heard some noise in the house."

Accustomed to frequent alarms of Madame Lerebour, he did not disturb himself very much, and quietly asked:

"What sort of noise, my darling?"

She trembled as if she were in a state of terror, and replied: "Noise—why, noise—the noise of footsteps. There is some one there."

He remained incredulous: "Some one? You think so? No; you must be mistaken. Besides, who do you think it can be!"

She shuddered:

"Who? Who? Why, thieves, of course, you imbecile!"

He got down quietly under the sheets:

"Why, no, my darling! No one is there; you probably dreamed it."

Then she flung off the coverlet, and, jumping out of bed in a rage, said:

"Why, then, you are just as cowardly as you are incapable! In any case, I shall not let myself be massacred owing to your pusillanimity."

And, snatching up the tongs from the fireplace, she placed herself in a fighting attitude opposite the bolted door.

Moved by his wife's display of valor, perhaps ashamed, he rose in his turn, sulkily, and without taking off his nightcap, he seized the shovel, and placed himself before his better half.

They waited twenty minutes in perfect silence. No fresh noise disturbed the repose of the house. Then Madame, becoming furious, got back into bed, saying: "Nevertheless I'm sure there is some one in the house."

In order to avoid anything like a quarrel he did not allude to this panic the following day.

But next night Mme. Lerebour woke up her husband even more abruptly than the night before, and gasped out: "Gustave, Gustave, somebody has just opened the garden gate!"

Astonished at this persistence, he fancied that his wife must have an attack of somnambulism, and was about to make an effort to arouse her from this dangerous sleep when he thought he actually heard a slight sound outside, beneath the windows.

He rose up, rushed to the window, and saw—yes, he saw—a white figure passing quickly along one of the garden walks.

He murmured, as if he was on the point of fainting: "There is some one." Then he recovered his self-possession, felt more resolute, and suddenly carried away by the formidable anger of a proprietor whose territory has been encroached upon, he said: "Wait! wait! and you shall see!"

He rushed toward the writing desk, opened it, took out the revolver, and dashed out on the stairs.

His wife, filled with consternation, followed him, exclaiming: "Gustave, Gustave, don't abandon me, don't leave me alone! Gustave! Gustave!"

But he scarcely heard her; he had by this time laid his hand on the garden gate.

Then she went back rapidly and barricaded herself in the bedroom.

* * * * * * *

She waited five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Wild terror took possession of her. Without doubt they had killed him; they had seized, garroted, strangled him. She would have preferred to hear the report of the six barrels of the revolver, to know that he was fighting, that he was defending himself. But this great silence, this terrifying silence of the country overwhelmed her.

She rang for Céleste. Céleste did not come in answer to the bell. She rang again, on the point of swooning, of losing consciousness. The whole house remained silent.

She pressed her burning forehead to the window, seeking to peer through the darkness without. She distinguished nothing but the blacker shadows of some shrubbery alongside the gray footprints on the road.

It struck half-past twelve. Her husband had been gone forty-five minutes. She would never see him again. No! she would never see him again. And she fell on her knees sobbing.

Two light knocks at the door of the apartment made her spring up with a bound. M. Lerebour called out to her: "Open, Palmyre, 'tis I." She rushed forward, opened the door, and, standing in front of him, with her arms akimbo and her eyes full of tears, exclaimed: "Where have you been, you dirty brute? Ah! you left me here by myself

nearly dead of fright. Ah! you care no more about me than if I never existed."

He closed the bedroom door; and he laughed and laughed like a madman, grinning from ear to ear, with his hands on his stomach, till the tears came into his eyes.

Madame Lerebour, stupefied, remained silent.

He stammered: "It was—it was Céleste who had an appointment in the conservatory. If you knew what—what I have seen . . ."

She had turned pale, choking with indignation.

"Eh? Do you tell me so? Céleste? In my house? in—my—house . . . in my—my—in my conservatory. And you have not killed the man who was her accomplice! You had a revolver and did not kill him? . . . In my house . . . in my house."

She sat down, not feeling able to do anything.

He danced a caper, snapped his fingers, smacked his tongue, and, still laughing, "If you knew, if you knew."

He suddenly gave her a kiss.

She tore herself away from him. And in a voice broken with rage, she said: "I will not let this girl remain one day longer in my house, do you hear? Not one day, not one hour. When she returns to the house we will throw her out."

M. Lerebour had seized his wife by the waist, and he pressed kisses on her neck, loud kisses, as in bygone days. She became silent once more, petrified with astonishment. But he, holding her clasped in his arms, drew her softly toward the bed.

* * * * * * *

Toward half-past nine in the morning Céleste,

astonished at not yet having seen her master and mistress, who always rose early, came and knocked softly at their door.

They were in bed, and they were gaily chatting side by side. She stood there astonished, and said: "Madame, the coffee is ready."

Madame Lerebour said in a very soft voice: "Bring it here to me, my girl. We are a little tired; we have slept very badly."

Scarcely had the maid gone than M. Lerebour began to laugh again, tickling his wife under the chin, and repeating: "If you knew. Oh! if you knew."

But she caught his hands, "Look here! keep quiet, my darling; if you laugh like this you will make yourself ill."

And she kissed him softly on the eyes.

* * * * * * *

Madame Lerebour has no more fits of sourness. Sometimes on bright nights the husband and wife come, with furtive steps, along by the shrubbery and flowerbeds as far as the little conservatory at the end of the garden. And they remain there, standing concealed, with their faces against the glass, as if they were looking at something strange and full of interest going on within.

They have increased Céleste's wages.

M. Lerebour has grown thin.

## BESIDE A DEAD MAN

HE was slowly dying, as consumptives die. I saw him each day, about two o'clock, sitting beneath the hotel windows on a bench in the promenade, looking out on the calm sea. He remained for some time without moving, in the heat of the sun, gazing mournfully at the Mediterranean. Every now and then, he cast a glance at the lofty mountains with beclouded summits that shut in Mentone: then, with a very slow movement, would he cross his long legs, so thin that they seemed like two bones, around which fluttered the cloth of his trousers, and he would open a book, always the same book. And then he did not stir any more, but read on, read on with his eye and his mind; all his wasting body seemed to read, all his soul plunged, lost itself, disappeared, in this book, up to the hour when the cool air made him cough a little. Then, he got up and reëntered the hotel.

He was a tall German, with fair beard, who breakfasted and dined in his own room, and spoke to nobody.

A vague curiosity attracted me to him. One day, I sat down by his side, having taken up a book, too, to keep up appearances, a volume of Musset's poems.

And I began to look through *Rolla*.

Suddenly, my neighbor said to me, in good French:

"Do you know German, Monsieur?"

"Not at all, Monsieur."

"I am sorry for that. Since chance has thrown us side by side, I could have lent you, I could have shown you, an inestimable thing—this book which I hold in my hand."

"What is it, pray?"

"It is a copy of my master, Schopenhauer, annotated with his own hand. All the margins, as you may see, are covered with his handwriting."

I took the book from him reverently, and I gazed at these forms incomprehensible to me, but which revealed the immortal thoughts of the greatest shatterer of dreams who had ever dwelt on earth.

And Musset's verses arose in my memory:

"Hast thou found out, Voltaire, that it is bliss to die,
Or does thy hideous smile over thy bleached bones fly?"

And involuntarily I compared the childish sarcasm, the religious sarcasm, of Voltaire with the irresistible irony of the German philosopher whose influence is henceforth ineffaceable.

Let us protest and let us be angry, let us be indignant, or let us be enthusiastic, Schopenhauer has

marked humanity with the zeal of his disdain and of his disenchantment.

A disabused pleasure-seeker, he overthrew beliefs, hopes, poetic ideals and chimeras, destroyed the aspirations, ravaged the confidence of souls, killed love, dragged down the chivalrous worship of women, crushed the illusions of hearts, and accomplished the most gigantic task ever attempted by skepticism. He spared nothing with his mocking spirit, and exhausted everything. And even to-day even those who execrate him seem to carry in their own souls particles of his thought.

"So, then, you were intimately acquainted with Schopenhauer?" I said to the German.

He smiled sadly.

"Up to the time of his death, Monsieur."

And he spoke to me about the philosopher and told me about the almost supernatural impression which this strange being made on all who came near him.

He gave me an account of the interview of the old iconoclast with a French politician, a doctrinaire Republican, who wanted to get a glimpse of this man, and found him in a noisy tavern, seated in the midst of his disciples, dry, wrinkled, laughing with an unforgettable laugh, attacking and tearing to pieces ideas and beliefs with a single word, as a dog tears with one bite of his teeth the tissues with which he plays.

He repeated for me the comment of this Frenchman as he went away, astonished and terrified: "I thought I had spent an hour with the devil."

Then he added:

"He had, indeed, Monsieur, a frightful smile, which terrified us even after his death. I can tell

you an anecdote about it that is not generally known, if it would interest you.''

And he began, in a languid voice, interrupted by frequent fits of coughing.

'' Schopenhauer had just died, and it was arranged that we should watch, in turn, two by two, till morning.

'' He was lying in a large apartment, very simple, vast and gloomy. Two wax candles were burning on the stand by the bedside.

'' It was midnight when I went on watch along with one of our comrades. The two friends whom we replaced had left the apartment, and we came and sat down at the foot of the bed.

'' The face was not changed. It was laughing. That pucker which we knew so well lingered still around the corners of the lips, and it seemed to us that he was about to open his eyes, to move and to speak. His thought, or rather his thoughts, enveloped us. We felt ourselves more than ever in the atmosphere of his genius, absorbed, possessed by him. His domination seemed to be even more sovereign now that he was dead. A feeling of mystery was blended with the power of this incomparable spirit.

'' The bodies of these men disappear, but they themselves remain; and in the night which follows the cessation of their heart's pulsation I assure you, Monsieur, they are terrifying.

'' And in hushed tones we talked about him, recalling to mind certain sayings, certain formulas of his, those startling maxims which are like jets of flame flung, in a few words, into the darkness of the Unknown Life.

'' ' It seems to me that he is going to speak,' said

my comrade. And we stared with uneasiness bordering on fear at the motionless face with its eternal laugh. Gradually, we began to feel ill at ease, oppressed, on the point of fainting. I faltered:

" ' I don't know what is the matter with me, but, I assure you I am not well.'

" And at that moment we noticed that there was an unpleasant odor from the corpse.

" Then, my comrades suggested that we should go into the adjoining room, and leave the door open; and I assented to his proposal.

" I took one of the wax candles which burned on the stand, and I left the second behind. Then we went and sat down at the other end of the adjoining apartment, in such a position that we could see the bed and the corpse, clearly revealed by the light.

" But he still held possession of us. One would have said that his immaterial essence, liberated, free, all-powerful and dominating, was flitting around us. And sometimes, too, the dreadful smell of the decomposed body came toward us and penetrated us, sickening and indefinable.

" Suddenly a shiver passed through our bones: a sound, a slight sound, came from the death-chamber. Immediately we fixed our glances on him, and we saw, yes, Monsieur, we saw distinctly, both of us, something white pass across the bed, fall on the carpet, and vanish under an armchair.

" We were on our feet before we had time to think of anything, distracted by stupefying terror, ready to run away. Then we stared at each other. We were horribly pale. Our hearts throbbed fiercely enough to have raised the clothing on our chests. I was the first to speak:

" ' Did you see? '

"'Yes, I saw.'

"'Can it be that he is not dead?'

"'Why, when the body is putrefying?'

"'What are we do do?"

"My companion said in a hesitating tone:

"'We must go and look.'

"I took our wax candle and entered first, glancing into all the dark corners in the large apartment. Nothing was moving now, and I approached the bed. But I stood transfixed with stupor and fright: Schopenhauer was no longer laughing! He was grinning in a horrible fashion, with his lips pressed together and deep hollows in his cheeks. I stammered out:

"'He is not dead!'

"But the terrible odor ascended to my nose and stifled me. And I no longer moved, but kept staring fixedly at him, terrified as if in the presence of an apparition.

"Then my companion, having seized the other wax candle, bent forward. Next, he touched my arm without uttering a word. I followed his glance, and saw on the ground, under the armchair by the side of the bed, standing out white on the dark carpet, and open as if to bite, Schopenhauer's set of artificial teeth.

"The work of decomposition, loosening the jaws, had made it jump out of the mouth.

"I was really frightened that day, Monsieur."

And as the sun was sinking toward the glittering sea, the consumptive German rose from his seat, gave me a parting bow, and retired into the hotel.

# MOTHER AND SON

A PARTY of men were chatting in the smoking-room after dinner. We were talking of unexpected legacies, strange inheritances. Then M. le Brument, who was sometimes called "the illustrious judge" and at other times "the illustrious lawyer," went and stood with his back to the fire.

"I have," said he, "to search for an heir who disappeared under peculiarly terrible circumstances. It is one of those simple and terrible dramas of ordinary life, a thing which possibly happens every day, and which is nevertheless one of the most dreadful things I know. Here are the facts:

"Nearly six months ago I was called to the bedside of a dying woman. She said to me:

"'Monsieur, I want to intrust to you the most delicate, the most difficult, and the most wearisome mission that can be conceived. Be good enough to notice my will, which is there on the table. A sum

of five thousand francs is left to you as a fee if you do not succeed, and of a hundred thousand francs if you do succeed. I want you to find my son after my death.'

" She asked me to assist her to sit up in bed, in order that she might talk with greater ease, for her voice, broken and gasping, was whistling in her throat.

" It was a very wealthy establishment. The luxurious apartment, of an elegant simplicity, was upholstered with materials as thick as walls, with a soft inviting surface.

" The dying woman continued:

" ' You are the first to hear my horrible story. I will try to have strength enough to finish it. You must know all, in order that you, whom I know to be a kind-hearted man as well as a man of the world, may have a sincere desire to aid me with all your power.

" ' Listen to me:

" ' Before my marriage, I loved a young man, whose suit was rejected by my family because he was not rich enough. Not long afterward, I married a man of great wealth. I married him through ignorance, through obedience, through indifference, as young girls do marry.

" ' I had a child, a boy. My husband died in the course of a few years.

" ' He whom I had loved had married, in his turn. When he saw that I was a widow, he was crushed by grief at knowing he was not free. He came to see me; he wept and sobbed so bitterly that it was enough to break my heart. He came to see me at first as a friend. Perhaps I ought not to have received him. What could I do? I was alone, so sad,

so solitary, so hopeless! And I loved him still. What sufferings we women have sometimes to endure!

"'I had only him in the world, my parents also being dead. He came frequently; he spent whole evenings with me. I should not have let him come so often, seeing that he was married. But I had not enough will-power to prevent him from coming.

"'How can I tell it?—he became my lover. How did this come about? Can I explain it? Can any one explain such things? Do you think it could be otherwise when two human beings are drawn to each other by the irresistible force of mutual affection? Do you believe, Monsieur, that it is always in our power to resist, that we can keep up the struggle for ever, and refuse to yield to the prayers, the supplications, the tears, the frenzied words, the appeals on bended knees, the transports of passion, with which we are pursued by the man we adore, whom we want to gratify even in his slightest wishes, whom we desire to crown with every possible happiness, and whom, if we are to be guided by a worldly code of honor, we must drive to despair. What strength would it not require? What a renunciation of happiness? what self-denial? and even what virtuous selfishness?

"'In short, Monsieur, I was his mistress; and I was happy. I became—and this was my greatest weakness and my greatest piece of cowardice—I became his wife's friend.

"'We brought up my son together; we made a man of him, a thorough man, intelligent, full of sense and resolution, of large and generous ideas. The boy reached the age of seventeen.

"'He, the young man, was fond of my—my lover, almost as fond of him as I was myself, for he

had been equally cherished and cared for by both of us. He used to call him his "dear friend," and respected him immensely, having never received from him anything but wise counsels and an example of integrity, honor, and probity. He looked upon him as an old loyal and devoted comrade of his mother, as a sort of moral father, guardian, protector—how am I to describe it?

"'Perhaps the reason why he never asked any questions was that he had been accustomed from his earliest years to see this man in my house, at my side, and at his side, always concerned about us both.

"'One evening the three of us were to dine together—this was my chief amusement—and I waited for the two men, asking myself which of them would be the first to arrive. The door opened; it was my old friend. I went toward him, with outstretched arms; and he pressed my lips in a long, delicious kiss.

"'All of a sudden, a slight sound, a faint rustling, that mysterious sensation which indicates the presence of another person, made us start and turn round abruptly. Jean, my son, stood there, livid, staring at us.

"'There was a moment of atrocious confusion. I drew back, holding out my hand toward my son as if in supplication; but I could not see him. He had gone.

"'We remained facing each other—my lover and I—crushed, unable to utter a word. I sank into an armchair, and I felt a desire, a vague, powerful desire, to flee, to go out into the night, and to disappear for ever. Then convulsive sobs rose in my throat, and I wept, shaken with spasms, my heart

breaking, all my nerves writhing with the horrible sensation of an irreparable misfortune, and with that dreadful sense of shame which, in such moments as this, fills a mother's heart.

" ' He looked at me in a terrified manner, not venturing to approach, or to speak to me or touch me, for fear of the boy's return. At last he said:

" ' " I am going to follow him—to talk to him —to explain matters to him. In short, I must see him and let him know——"

" ' And he hurried away.

" ' I waited—waited in a distracted frame of mind, trembling at the least sound, starting with fear and with some unutterably strange and intolerable emotion at every slight crackling of the fire in the grate.

" ' I waited an hour, two hours, feeling my heart swell with a dread I had never before experienced, such an anguish that I would not wish the greatest criminal to endure ten minutes of such misery. Where was my son? What was he doing?

" ' About midnight, a messenger brought me a note from my lover. I still know its contents by heart:

" ' " Has your son returned? I did not find him. I am down here. I do not want to go up at this hour."

" ' I wrote in pencil on the same slip of paper:

" ' " Jean has not returned. You must find him."

" ' And I remained all night in the armchair, waiting for him.

" ' I felt as if I were going mad. I longed to run wildly about, to roll on the ground. And yet I did not even stir, but kept waiting hour after hour.

What was going to happen? I tried to imagine, to guess. But I could form no conception, in spite of my efforts, in spite of the tortures of my soul!

"'And now I feared that they might meet. What would they do in that case? What would my son do? My mind was torn with fearful doubts, with terrible suppositions.

"'You can understand my feelings, can you not, Monsieur?

"'My chambermaid, who knew nothing, who understood nothing, came into the room every moment, believing, naturally, that I had lost my reason. I sent her away with a word or a movement of the hand. She went for the doctor, who found me in the throes of a nervous attack.

"'I was put to bed. I had brain fever.

"'When I regained consciousness, after a long illness, I saw beside my bed my—lover—alone.

"'I exclaimed:

"'"My son? Where is my son?"

"'He made no reply. I stammered:

"'"Dead—dead. Has he committed suicide?"

"'"No, no, I swear it. But we have not found him in spite of all my efforts."

"'Then, becoming suddenly exasperated and even indignant—for women are subject to such outbursts of unaccountable and unreasoning anger—I said:

"'"I forbid you to come near me or to see me again unless you find him. Go away!"

"'He did go away.

"'I have never seen one or the other of them since, Monsieur, and thus I have lived for the last twenty years.

"'Can you imagine what all this meant to me?

Can you understand this monstrous punishment, this slow, perpetual laceration of a mother's heart, this abominable, endless waiting? Endless, did I say? No; it is about to end, for I am dying. I am dying without ever again seeing either of them—either one or the other!'

"'He—the man I loved—has written to me every day for the last twenty years; and I—I have never consented to see him, even for one second; for I had a strange feeling that, if he were to come back here, my son would make his appearance at the same moment. O! my son! my son! Is he dead? Is he living? Where is he hiding? Over there, perhaps, beyond the great ocean, in some country so far away that even its very name is unknown to me! Does he ever think of me? Ah! if he only knew! How cruel children are! Did he understand to what frightful suffering he condemned me, into what depths of despair, into what tortures, he cast me while I was still in the prime of life, leaving me to suffer until this moment, when I am about to die—me, his mother, who loved him with all the intensity of a mother's love! Oh! isn't it cruel, cruel?

"'You will tell him all this, Monsieur—will you not? You will repeat to him my last words:

"'"My child, my dear, dear child, be less harsh toward poor women! Life is already brutal and savage enough in its dealings with them. My dear son, think of what the existence of your poor mother has been ever since the day you left her. My dear child, forgive her, and love her, now that she is dead, for she has had to endure the most frightful penance ever inflicted on a woman."'

"She gasped for breath, trembling, as if she had

addressed the last words to her son and as if he stood by her bedside.

" Then she added:

" ' You will tell him also, Monsieur, that I never again saw—the other.'

" Once more she ceased speaking, then, in a broken voice, she said:

" ' Leave me now, I beg of you. I want to die all alone, since they are not with me.' "

Maître Le Brumet added:

" And I left the house, messieurs, crying like a fool, so vehemently, indeed, that my coachman turned round to stare at me.

" And to think that, every day, dramas like this are being enacted all around us!

" I have not found the son—that son—well, say what you like about him, but I call him that criminal son! "

# CHÂLI

## I

"I HAD a very singular adventure once," said Admiral de la Vallée, who had been dozing in his armchair. His voice was like an old woman's and he had that eternal dry wrinkled smile *à la* Voltaire, that made people think he was a dreadful skeptic.

"I was thirty years of age and first lieutenant in the navy, when I was placed in charge of an astronomical expedition to Central India. The English Government provided me, with all the necessary means for carrying out my enterprise, and I was soon busied with a few assistants in that strange, surprising country.

"It would take ten volumes to relate that journey. I went through wonderfully magnificent regions, and was received by strangely handsome princes, who entertained me with incredible magnificence. For

two months it seemed to me as if I were one of the actors in a poet's fancy in a fairy kingdom, on the backs of imaginary elephants. In the midst of wild forests I discovered extraordinary ruins, delicate and chiseled like jewels, flimsy as lace and enormous as mountains, those fabulous, divine monuments which are so graceful that one falls in love with their form as one falls in love with a woman, and feels a physical and sensual pleasure in looking at them. As Victor Hugo says, 'Although wide awake, I was walking in a dream.'

"Toward the end of my journey I reached Ganhard, which was formerly one of the most prosperous towns in Central India, but is now much decayed and governed by a wealthy, arbitrary, violent, generous, and cruel prince. His name is Rajah Maddan, a true Oriental potentate, delicate and barbarous, affable and sanguinary, combining feminine gentleness with pitiless ferocity.

"The city lies at the bottom of a valley, on the banks of a little lake, surrounded by pagodas, whose walls are washed by its waters.

"At a distance the city looks like a white spot which grows larger as one approaches it, and gradually one discovers the domes and spires, all the slender and graceful characteristics of Indian monuments.

"At about an hour's distance from the gates, I met a superbly caparisoned elephant, surrounded by a guard of honor which the sovereign had sent me, and I was conducted to the palace with great ceremony.

"I should have liked to have taken time to put on my gala uniform, but royal impatience would not admit of it. The rajah was anxious to make my ac-

quaintance, to know what he might expect from me.

" I was introduced into a great hall surrounded by galleries, in the midst of bronze-colored soldiers in splendid uniforms; all about me stood men dressed in striking robes studded with precious stones.

" I saw a shining mass, a kind of resplendent sun, reposing on a bench like our garden benches, without a back; it was the rajah, who was waiting for me, motionless, in a robe of the purest canary color. He had some ten or fifteen million of francs' worth of diamonds on him, and by itself, on his forehead, glistened the famous star of Delhi, which has always belonged to the illustrious dynasty of the Pariharas of Mundore, from whom my host was descended.

" He was a man of about five-and-twenty, who appeared to have some negro blood in his veins, although he belonged to the purest Hindoo race. He had large, almost motionless, and expressionless eyes, full lips, a curly beard, low forehead, and dazzling sharp white teeth, which he frequently showed with a mechanical smile. He got up and gave me his hand in the English fashion, and then made me sit down beside him on a bench which was so high that my feet hardly touched the ground, and I was very uncomfortable.

" He immediately proposed a tiger hunt for the next day. War and hunting were his chief occupations, and he could hardly understand how one could care for anything else. He was evidently fully persuaded that I had only come all that distance to amuse him a little, and to be the companion of his pleasures.

" As I stood greatly in need of his assistance, I

tried to flatter his tastes, and he was so pleased that he immediately wished to show me how his trained boxers fought, and led the way into a kind of arena situated within the palace.

" At his command two naked men appeared, their hands covered with steel claws. They immediately began to attack each other, trying to strike one another with these sharp weapons, which left long cuts, from which the blood flowed freely down their dark skin.

" This lasted till their bodies were a mass of wounds, from tearing each other's flesh with this sort of rake with sharp-pointed prongs. One of them had his jaw smashed, while the ear of the other was split into three pieces.

" The Prince looked on with ferocious pleasure, uttered grunts of delight, and imitated all their movements with careless gestures, crying out constantly:

" ' Strike, strike hard! '

" One fell down unconscious, and had to be carried out of the arena, covered with blood, while the rajah uttered a sigh of regret because it was so soon over.

" He turned to me to know my opinion; I was disgusted, but congratulated him loudly. He then gave orders that I was to be conducted to Couch-Mahal—the palace of pleasure—where I was to be lodged.

" This bijou palace was situated at the extremity of the royal park, and one of its walls was built into the sacred lake of Vihara. It was square and had three rows of galleries with colonnades of most beautiful workmanship. At each angle there were light, lofty or low towers, either single or in pairs:

no two were alike, and they looked like flowers growing out of that graceful plant of Oriental architecture. All were surmounted by fantastic roofs, like coquettish ladies' hats.

"In the middle of the edifice a large white dome raised its round cupola beside a beautiful clock tower.

"The whole building was sculptured in arabesques from top to bottom, those exquisite traceries which delight the eye; motionless processions of delicate figures whose attitudes and gestures told in stone the story of Indian manners and customs.

"The rooms were lighted by arched windows overlooking the gardens. On the marble floor were graceful bouquets designed in onyx, lapis-lazuli, and agate.

"I had scarcely time to finish my toilet when Haribada, a court dignitary who was specially charged to communicate with me, announced his sovereign's visit.

"The saffron-colored rajah appeared, again shook hands with me, and began to tell me a thousand different things, constantly asking me for my opinion, which I had great difficulty in giving him. Then he wished to show me the ruins of the former palace at the other extremity of the gardens.

"It was a real forest of stones inhabited by a tribe of large apes. On our approach the males began to run along the walls, making the most hideous faces at us, while the females ran away, carrying off their young in their arms. The rajah shouted with laughter and pinched my arm to draw my attention and to testify his own delight, and sat down in the midst of the ruins, while around us, squatting on the top of the walls, perching on every eminence, a num-

ber of animals with white whiskers put out their tongues and shook their fists at us.

" When he had seen enough of this, the yellow rajah rose and began to walk along sedately, keeping me always at his side, happy at having shown me such things on the very day of my arrival, and reminding me that a grand tiger hunt was to take place the next day, in my honor.

" I was present, and also at a second, third, and at ten, twenty in succession. We hunted all the animals which the country produces; the panther, the bear, elephant, antelope, the hippopotamus, and the crocodile—and how many more I know not, half the animals in the world, I should say. I was disgusted at seeing so much blood flow, and tired of this monotonous pleasure.

" At length the Prince's ardor abated and, at my urgent request, he left me a little leisure for work, and contented himself by loading me with costly presents. He sent me jewels, magnificent stuffs, and well-broken animals of all sorts, which Haribada presented to me with apparently as grave respect as if I had been the sun himself, although he heartily despised me at the bottom of his heart.

" Every day a procession of servants brought me, in covered dishes, a portion of each course that was served at the royal table; every day he seemed to take an extreme pleasure in getting up some new entertainment for me—dances by the *bayadères,* jugglers, reviews of the troops, and I was obliged to pretend to enjoy it all so as not to hurt his feelings when he wished to show me his wonderful country in all its charm and all its splendor.

" As soon as I was left alone for a few moments I either worked or went to see the monkeys, whose

company pleased me a great deal better than that of their royal master.

" One evening, however, on coming back from a walk, I found Haribada outside the gate of my palace. He told me in mysterious tones that a gift from the king was waiting for me in my room, and he said that his master begged me to excuse him for not having sooner thought of offering me that of which I had been deprived for such a long time.

" After these obscure remarks the ambassador bowed and withdrew.

" When I went in I saw six little girls standing against the wall, motionless, side by side, like smelts on a skewer. The eldest was perhaps ten and the youngest eight years old. For the first moment I could not understand why this girls' school had taken up its abode in my rooms; then, however, I divined the Prince's delicate attention: he had made me a present of a harem, and had chosen it very young from an excess of generosity.

" For some time I remained confused and embarrassed, ashamed in the presence of these children, who looked at me with great grave eyes which seemed already to divine what I should want of them.

" I did not know what to say to them; I felt inclined to send them back; but one cannot return the presents of a prince; it would have been a mortal insult. I was obliged, therefore, to keep them, and to install this troop of children in my rooms.

" They stood motionless, looking at me, waiting for my orders, trying to read my thoughts in my eyes. Confound such a present! How dreadfully it was in my way! At last, thinking that I must look rather ridiculous, I asked the eldest her name.

"'Châli,' she replied.

"This little creature, with her beautiful skin, which was slightly yellow, like old ivory, was a marvel, a perfect statue, with the somewhat long, severe lines of her face.

"I then asked, in order to see what she would reply, and also, perhaps, to embarrass her:

"'What have you come here for?'

"She replied, in her soft, harmonious voice:

"'I have come to be altogether at my lord's disposal, and to do whatever hē wishes.'

"She was evidently quite resigned.

"I put the same question to the youngest, who answered immediately in her shrill voice:

"'I am here to do whatever you ask me, my master.'

"This one was like a little mouse, and was very taking, just as they all were, so I took her in my arms and kissed her. The others made a movement to go away, thinking, no doubt, that I had made my choice; but I ordered them to stay, and sitting down in the Indian fashion, I made them all sit round me, and began to tell them fairy tales, for I spoke their language fairly well.

"They listened attentively, and trembled, wringing their hands in agony. Poor little things, they were not thinking any longer of the reason why they were sent to me.

"When I had finished my story, I called Latchmân, my confidential servant, and made him bring sweetmeats and cakes, of which they ate enough to make themselves ill; then, as I began to find the adventure rather funny, I organized games to amuse them.

"One of these diversions had an enormous suc-

cess. I made a bridge of my legs, and the six children ran underneath, the smallest beginning and the tallest always knocking against them a little, because she did not stoop enough. It made them shout with laughter, and these young voices sounding beneath the low vaults of my sumptuous palace seemed to wake it up and to people it with childlike gaiety, filling it with life.

" Next I took great interest in seeing to the sleeping apartments of my innocent concubines, and in the end I saw them safely locked up under the surveillance of four female servants, whom the Prince had sent me at the same time in order to take care of my sultanas.

" For a week I took the greatest pleasure in acting the papa toward these living dolls. We had capital games of hide-and-seek, puss-in-the-corner, etc., which gave them the greatest pleasure, for every day I taught them a new game, to their intense delight.

" My house now resembled a school, and my little friends, dressed in beautiful silk stuffs and in materials embroidered with gold and silver, ran up and down the long galleries and the quiet rooms like little human animals.

" At last, one evening, without my knowing exactly how it happened, the oldest of them, the one called Châli, who looked so like an ivory statue, became my wife.

" She was an adorable little creature, timid and gentle, who soon got to love me ardently, with some degree of shame, with hesitation, as if afraid of European justice, with reserve and scruples, and yet with passionate tenderness. I cherished her as if I had been her father.

" The others continued to play in the palace like a lot of happy kittens, and Châli never left me except when I went to the Prince.

" We passed delicious hours together in the ruins of the old castle, surrounded by the monkeys, who had become our friends.

" She used to sit on my knees, turning all sorts of things over in her little sphinx's head, or perhaps not thinking of anything, retaining the beautiful, charming hereditary pose of that noble and dreamy people, the hieratic pose of the sacred statues.

" In a large brass dish I had brought provisions, cakes, fruits. The apes came nearer and nearer, followed by their young ones, who were more timid; at last they sat down round us in a circle, without daring to come any nearer, waiting for me to distribute my delicacies. Then, almost invariably, a male more daring than the rest would come to me with outstretched hand, like a beggar, and I would give him something, which he would take to his wife. All the others immediately began to utter furious cries, cries of rage and jealousy; and I could not make the terrible racket cease except by throwing each one a share.

" As I was very comfortable in the ruins I had my instruments brought there, so that I might be able to work. As soon, however, as they saw the copper fittings on my scientific instruments, the monkeys, no doubt taking them for some deadly engines, fled on all sides, uttering the most piercing cries.

" I often also spent my evening with Châli on one of the outer galleries that overlooked the lake of Vihara. Without speaking we looked at the bright moon gliding over the sky and throwing a mantle of

trembling silver across the water, and down below, on the farther shore, the row of small pagodas like dainty mushrooms with their stalks in the water. Taking the thoughtful little head between my hands, I printed a long, soft kiss on Châli's polished brow, on her great eyes, which were full of the secret of that ancient land of mystery, and on her calm lips, which opened to my caress. I felt a vague, though strongly poetic sensation, a sensation that in this girl I possessed a whole race, that mother race from which all the rest originated.

" The Prince continued to load me with presents. One day he sent me an object which excited a passionate admiration in Châli. It was merely one of those cardboard boxes covered with shells that can be bought at any European seaside resort for a trifling sum. But there it was a jewel beyond price, and no doubt was the first that had found its way into the kingdom. I put it on a table and left it there, wondering at the value which was set upon this trumpery article out of a bazaar.

" But Châli never got tired of looking at it, of admiring it ecstatically. From time to time she would say to me, ' May I touch it? ' And when I gave her permission she raised the lid, closed it again with the greatest care, touched the shells very gently, the contact appearing to give her real physical pleasure.

" However, my work was now finished and it was time for me to return. I was a long time in making up my mind, detained by tenderness for my little friend, but at last I was obliged to fix the day of departure.

" The Prince got up fresh hunting excursions and fresh wrestling matches, but after a fortnight of

these pleasures I declared that I could stay no longer, and he gave me my liberty.

" My farewell from Châli was heartrending. She cried a long time, with her head on my breast, her little frame shaken with sobs. I did not know how to console her; my kisses were useless.

" All at once an idea struck me, and I went and got the shell box, and putting it into her hands, said: ' That is for you; it is yours.'

" Then I saw her smile at first. Her whole face was lighted up with an inward joy, that profound joy that comes when apparently impossible dreams are suddenly realized, and she embraced me ardently.

" All the same, she wept bitterly when I bade her a last farewell.

" I gave paternal kisses and cakes to all the children, and then I started.

## II

" Two years had passed when my duties again called me to Bombay, and, because I knew the country and the language well, I was left there to undertake another mission.

" I finished what I had to do as quickly as possible, and as I had a considerable amount of spare time on my hands I determined to go and see my friend the King of Ganhard and my dear little Châli once more, though I expected to find her much changed.

" The rajah received me with every demonstration of pleasure, and hardly left me for a moment during the first day of my visit. At night, however,

when I was alone, I sent for Haribada, and after several irrelevant questions I said to him:

"'Do you know what has became of little Châli, whom the rajah gave me?'

"He immediately assumed a sad and troubled look, and said, in evident embarrassment:

"'We had better not speak of her.'

"'Why? She was a dear little woman.'

"'She turned out badly, sir.'

"'What—Châli? What has become of her? Where is she?'

"'I meant to say that she came to a bad end.'

"'A bad end! Is she dead?'

"'Yes. She committed a very dreadful action.'

"I was very much distressed. I felt my heart beat, and my breast was oppressed with grief, but I insisted on knowing what she had done and what had happened to her.

"The man became more and more embarrassed, and murmured: 'You had better not ask about it.'

"'But I want to know.'

"'She stole——'

"'Who—Châli? What did she steal?'

"'Something that belonged to you.'

"'To me? What do you mean?'

"'The day you left she stole that little box which the Prince had given you; it was found in her hands.'

"'What box are you talking about?'

"'The box covered with shells.'

"'But I gave it to her.'

"The Indian looked at me with stupefaction, then replied: 'Well, she declared with the most sacred oaths that you had given it to her, but nobody could believe that you could have given a

king's present to a slave, and so the rajah had her punished.'

"'How was she punished? What was done to her?'

"'She was tied up in a sack, and thrown into the lake from this window, from the window of the room in which we are, where she had committed the theft.'

"I felt the most profound grief that I ever experienced, and I made a sign to Haribada to go away, so that he might not see my tears; and I spent the night on the gallery that overlooked the lake, on the gallery where I had so often held the poor child on my knees.

"I pictured to myself her pretty little body lying decomposed in a sack in the dark waters beneath me, those waters which we had so often looked at together.

"The next day I left again, in spite of the rajah's entreaties and evident vexation; and I now still feel as if I had never loved any one but Châli."

# AFTER

"MY darlings," said the Comtesse, "you might go to bed."

The three children, two girls and a boy, rose and kissed their grandmother. Then they said good night to M. le Curé, who had dined at the château, as was his custom every Thursday.

The Abbé Mauduit lifted two of the children on his knees, passing his long arms clad in black round their necks, and kissing them tenderly on the forehead as he drew their heads toward him like a father.

Then he set them down on the ground, and the little beings went off, the boy ahead, and the girls following.

"You are fond of children, Monsieur," said the Comtesse.

"Very fond, Madame."

The old woman raised her bright eyes toward the priest.

"And—has your solitude never weighed too heavily on you?"

"Yes, sometimes."

He became silent, hesitated, and then added: "But I was never made for ordinary life."

"What do you know about it?"

"Oh! I know very well. I was made to be a priest; I followed my vocation."

The Comtesse kept staring at him:

"Come now, Monsieur, tell me this—tell me how it was you resolved to renounce for ever all that makes the rest of us love life—all that consoles and sustains us? What is it that drove you, impelled you, to separate yourself from the great natural path of marriage and the family. You are neither an enthusiast nor a fanatic, neither a gloomy person nor a sad person. Was it some incident, some sorrow, that led you to take life vows?"

The Abbé Mauduit rose and approached the fire, then, holding toward the flame his big shoes, such as country priests generally wear, he seemed still hesitating as to what reply he should make.

He was a tall old man with white hair, and for the last twenty years had been pastor of the parish of Saint-Antoine du Rocher. The peasants said of him: "There's a good man for you!" And indeed he was a good man, benevolent, friendly to all, gentle, and, to crown all, generous. Like Saint Martin, he had cut his cloak in two. He laughed readily, and wept also, on slight provocation, just like a woman—which prejudiced him more or less in the hard minds of the country folk.

The old Comtesse de Saville, living in retirement in her château of Rocher, in order to bring up her grandchildren, after the successive deaths of her son

and her daughter-in-law, was very much attached to her *curé*, and used to say of him: "What a heart he has!"

He came every Thursday to spend the evening with the Comtesse, and they were close friends, with the frank and honest friendship of old people.

She persisted:

"Look here, Monsieur! it is your turn now to make a confession!"

He repeated: "I was not made for ordinary life. I saw it fortunately in time, and I have had many proofs since that I made no mistake on the point.

"My parents, who were mercers in Verdiers, and were quite well to do, had great ambitions for me. They sent me to a boarding-school while I was very young. None knows what a boy may suffer at school through the mere fact of separation, of isolation. This monotonous life without affection is good for some and detestable for others. Young people are often more sensitive than one supposes, and by shutting them up thus too soon, far from those they love, we may develop to an exaggerated extent a sensitiveness which is overwrought and may become sickly and dangerous.

"I scarcely ever played; I had no companions; I passed my hours in homesickness; I spent the whole night weeping in my bed. I sought to bring before my mind recollections of home, trifling memories of little things, little events. I thought incessantly of all I had left behind there. I became almost imperceptibly an over-sensitive youth to whom the slightest annoyances were terrible griefs.

"In this way I remained taciturn, self-absorbed, without expansion, without confidants. This mental

excitement was going on secretly and surely. The nerves of children are quickly affected, and one should see to it that they live a tranquil life until they are almost fully developed. But who ever reflects that, for certain boys, an unjust imposition may be as great a pang as the death of a friend in later years? Who can explain why certain young temperaments are liable to terrible emotions for the slightest cause, and may eventually become morbid and incurable?

"This was my case. This faculty of regret developed in me to such an extent that my existence became a martyrdom.

"I did not speak about it; I said nothing about it; but gradually I became so sensitive that my soul resembled an open wound. Everything that affected me gave me painful twitchings, frightful vibrations, and consequently impaired my health. Happy are the men whom nature has buttressed with indifference and armed with stoicism.

"I reached my sixteenth year. An excessive timidity had arisen from this abnormal sensitiveness. Feeling myself unprotected from all the attacks of chance or fate, I feared every contact, every approach, every current. I lived as though I were threatened by an unknown and always expected misfortune. I did not venture either to speak or do anything in public. I had, indeed, the sensation that life is a battle, a dreadful conflict in which one receives terrible blows, grievous, mortal wounds. In place of cherishing, like all men, a cheerful anticipation of the morrow, I had only a confused fear of it, and felt in my own mind a desire to conceal myself to avoid that combat in which I would be vanquished and slain.

" As soon as my studies were finished, they gave me six months' time to choose a career. A very simple occurrence showed me clearly, all of a sudden, the diseased condition of my mind, made me understand the danger, and determined me to flee from it.

" Verdiers is a little town surrounded with plains and woods. In the central street stands my parents' house. I now passed my days far from this dwelling which I had so much regretted, so much desired. Dreams had reawakened in me, and I walked alone in the fields in order to let them escape and fly away. My father and mother, quite occupied with business, and anxious about my future, talked to me only about their profits or about my possible plans. They were fond of me after the manner of hard-headed, practical people; they had more reason than heart in their affection for me. I lived imprisoned in my thoughts, and vibrating with my eternal anxiety.

" Now, one evening, after a long walk, as I was making my way home with great strides so as not to be late, I saw a dog trotting toward me. He was a species of red spaniel, very lean, with long curly ears.

" When he was ten paces away from me he stopped. I did the same. Then he began wagging his tail, and came over to me with short steps and nervous movements of his whole body, bending down on his paws as if appealing to me, and softly shaking his head. I spoke to him. He then began to crawl along in such a sad, humble, suppliant manner that I felt the tears coming into my eyes. I approached him; he ran away, then he came back again; and I bent down on one knee trying to coax him to approach me, with soft words. At last, he was within

reach of my hands, and I gently and very carefully stroked him.

" He gained courage, gradually rose and, placing his paws on my shoulders, began to lick my face. He followed me to the house.

" This was really the first being I had passionately loved, because he returned my affection. My attachment to this animal was certainly exaggerated and ridiculous. It seemed to me in a confused sort of way that we were two brothers, lost on this earth, and therefore isolated and without defense, one as well as the other. He never again quitted my side. He slept at the foot of my bed, ate at the table in spite of the objections of my parents, and followed me in my solitary walks.

" I often stopped at the side of a ditch, and sat down in the grass. Sam immediately rushed up, lay down at my feet, and lifted up my hand with his muzzle that I might caress him.

" One day toward the end of June, as we were on the road from Saint-Pierre de Chavrol, I saw the diligence from Pavereau coming along. Its four horses were going at a gallop, with its yellow box seat, and its imperial covered with black leather. The coachman cracked his whip; a cloud of dust rose up under the wheels of the heavy vehicle, then floated behind, just as a cloud would do.

" Suddenly, as the vehicle came close to me, Sam, perhaps frightened by the noise and wishing to join me, jumped in front of it. A horse's hoof knocked him down. I saw him roll over, turn round, fall back again beneath the horses' feet, then the coach gave two jolts, and behind it I saw something quivering in the dust on the road. He was nearly cut in two; all his intestines were hanging out and blood was

spurting from the wound. He tried to get up, to walk, but he could only move his two front paws, and scratch the ground with them, as if to make a hole. The two others were already dead. And he howled dreadfully, mad with pain.

" He died in a few minutes. I cannot describe how much I felt and suffered. I was confined to my room for a month.

" One night, my father, enraged at seeing me so affected by such a trifling occurrence, exclaimed:

" ' How will it be when you have real griefs—if you lose your wife or children? '

" His words haunted me and I began to see my condition clearly. I understood why all the small miseries of each day assumed in my eyes the importance of a catastrophe; I saw that I was organized in such a way that I suffered dreadfully from everything, that every painful impression was multiplied by my diseased sensibility, and an atrocious fear of life took possession of me. I was without passions, without ambitions; I resolved to sacrifice possible joys in order to avoid sure sorrows. Existence is short, but I made up my mind to spend it in the service of others, in relieving their troubles and enjoying their happiness. Having no direct experience of either one or the other, I should only experience a milder form of emotion.

" And if you only knew how, in spite of this, misery tortures me, ravages me! But what would formerly have been an intolerable affliction has become commiseration, pity.

" These sorrows which cross my path at every moment, I could not endure if they affected me directly. I could not have seen one of my children die without dying myself. And I have, in spite of every-

thing, preserved such a mysterious, penetrating fear of events that the sight of the postman entering my house makes a shiver pass every day through my veins, and yet I have nothing to be afraid of now."

The Abbé Mauduit ceased speaking. He stared into the fire in the huge grate, as if he saw there mysterious things, all the unknown of the existence he might have passed had he been more fearless in the face of suffering.

He added, then, in a subdued tone:

"I was right. I was not made for this world."

The Comtesse said nothing at first; but at length, after a long silence, she remarked:

"For my part, if I had not my grandchildren, I believe I would not have the courage to live."

And the *curé* rose up without saying another word.

As the servants were asleep in the kitchen, she accompanied him herself to the door, which looked out on the garden, and she saw his tall shadow, lit up by the reflection of the lamp, disappearing through the goom of night.

Then she came back and sat down before the fire, and pondered over many things we never think of when we are young.

## BOITELLE

FATHER BOITELLE (Antoine) made a specialty of undertaking dirty jobs all through the countryside. Whenever there was a ditch or a cesspool to be cleaned out, a dunghill removed, a sewer cleansed, or any dirt-hole whatever, he was always employed to do it.

He would come with the instruments of his trade, his sabots covered with dirt, and set to work, complaining incessantly about his occupation. When people asked him then why he did this loathsome work, he would reply resignedly.

"Faith, 'tis for my children, whom I must support. This brings me in more than anything else."

He had, indeed, fourteen children. If any one asked him what had become of them, he would say with an air of indifference:

"There are only eight of them left in the house. One is out at service, and five are married."

When the questioner wanted to know whether they were well married, he replied vivaciously:

"I did not oppose them. I opposed them in nothing. They married just as they pleased. We shouldn't go against people's likings, it turns out badly. I am a night scavenger because my parents went against my likings. But for that I would have become a workman like the others."

Here is the way his parents had thwarted him in his likings:

He was at the time a soldier stationed at Havre, not more stupid than another, or sharper either, a rather simple fellow, however. When he was not on duty, his greatest pleasure was to walk along the quay, where the bird dealers congregate. Sometimes alone, sometimes with a soldier from his own part of the country, he would slowly saunter along by cages containing parrots with green backs and yellow heads from the banks of the Amazon, or parrots with gray backs and red heads from Senegal, or enormous macaws, which look like birds, reared in hot-houses, with their flower-like feathers, their plumes, and their tufts. Parrots of every size, who seem painted with minute care by the miniaturist, God Almighty, and the little birds, all the smaller birds hopped about, yellow, blue, and variegated, mingling their cries with the noise of the quay, and adding to the din caused by unloading the vessels, as well as by passengers and vehicles, a violent clamor, loud, shrill, and deafening, as if from some distant forest of monsters.

Boitelle would pause, with wondering eyes, wide-open mouth, laughing and enraptured, showing his teeth to the captive cockatoos, who kept nodding their white or yellow topknots toward the glaring red of his breeches and the copper buckle of his belt. When he found a bird that could talk, he put ques-

tions to it, and if it happened at the time to be disposed to reply and to hold a conversation with him he would carry away enough amusement to last him till evening. He also found heaps of amusement in looking at the monkeys, and could conceive no greater luxury for a rich man than to possess these animals, just like cats and dogs. This kind of taste for the exotic he had in his blood, as people have a taste for the chase, or for medicine, or for the priesthood. He could not help returning to the quay every time the gates of the barracks opened, drawn toward it by an irresistible longing.

On one occasion, having stopped almost in ecstasy before an enormous macaw, which was swelling out its plumes, bending forward, and bridling up again as if making the court curtsies of parrot-land, he saw the door of a little café adjoining the bird dealer's shop open, and a young negress appeared, wearing on her head a red silk handkerchief. She was sweeping into the street the corks and sand of the establishment.

Boitelle's attention was soon divided between the bird and the woman, and he really could not tell which of these two beings he contemplated with the greater astonishment and delight.

The negress, having swept the rubbish into the street, raised her eyes, and, in her turn, was dazzled by the soldier's uniform. There she stood facing him with her broom in her hands as if she were bringing him a rifle, while the macaw continued bowing. But at the end of a few seconds the soldier began to feel embarrassed at this attention, and he walked away quietly so as not to look as if he were beating a retreat.

But he came back. Almost every day he passed

before the Café des Colonies, and often he could distinguish through the window the figure of the little black-skinned maid serving " bocks " or glasses of brandy to the sailors of the port. Frequently, too, she would come out to the door on seeing him; soon, without even having exchanged a word, they smiled at one another like acquaintances; and Boitelle felt his heart touched when he suddenly saw, glittering between the dark lips of the girl, a shining row of white teeth. At length, one day he ventured to enter, and was quite surprised to find that she could speak French like every one else. The bottle of lemonade, of which she was good enough to accept a glassful, remained in the soldier's recollection memorably delicious, and it became a custom with him to come and absorb in this little tavern on the quay all the agreeable drinks which he could afford.

For him it was a treat, a happiness, on which his thoughts dwelt constantly, to watch the black hand of the little maid pouring something into his glass while her teeth laughed more than her eyes. At the end of two months they became fast friends, and Boitelle, after his first astonishment at discovering that this negress had as good principles as honest French girls, that she exhibited a regard for economy, industry, religion, and good conduct, loved her more on that account, and was so charmed with her that he wanted to marry her.

He told her his intentions, which made her dance with joy. She had also a little money, left her by a female oyster dealer, who had picked her up when she had been left on the quay at Havre by an American captain. This captain had found her, when she was only about six years old, lying on bales of cotton in the hold of his ship, some hours after his de-

parture from New York. On his arrival in Havre, he abandoned to the care of this compassionate oyster dealer the little black creature, who had been hidden on board his vessel, he knew not why or by whom.

The oyster woman having died, the young negress became a servant at the Colonial tavern.

Antoine Boitelle added: "This will be all right if my parents don't oppose it. I will never go against them, you understand, never! I'm going to say a word or two to them the first time I go back to the country."

On the following week, in fact, having obtained twenty-four hours' leave, he went to see his family, who cultivated a little farm at Tourteville, near Yvetot.

He waited till the meal was finished, the hour when the coffee baptized with brandy makes people more open-hearted, before informing his parents that he had found a girl who satisfied his tastes, all his tastes, so completely that there could not exist any other in all the world so perfectly suited to him.

The old people, on hearing this, immediately assumed a cautious manner, and wanted explanations. He had concealed nothing from them except the color of her skin.

She was a servant, without much means, but strong, thrifty, clean, well-conducted, and sensible. All these things were better than money would be in the hands of a bad housewife. Moreover, she had a few sous, left her by a woman who had reared her, a good number of sous, almost a little dowry, fifteen hundred francs in the savings bank. The old people, persuaded by his talk, and relying also on their own judgment, were gradually weakening, when he

came to the delicate point. Laughing in rather a constrained fashion, he said:

"There's only one thing you may not like. She is not a white slip."

They did not understand, and he had to explain at some length and very cautiously, to avoid shocking them, that she belonged to the dusky race of which they had only seen samples in pictures at Epinal. Then they became restless, perplexed, alarmed, as if he had proposed a union with the devil.

The mother said: "Black? How much of her is black? Is the whole of her?"

He replied, "Certainly. Everywhere, just as you are white everywhere."

The father interposed, "Black? Is it as black as the pot?"

The son answered: "Perhaps a little less than that. She is black, but not disgustingly black. The priest's cassock is black; but it is not uglier than a surplice, which is white."

The father said: "Are there more black people besides her in her country?"

And the son, with an air of conviction, exclaimed, "Certainly!"

But the old man shook his head.

"That must be unpleasant."

And the son:

"It isn't more disagreeable than anything else when you get accustomed to it."

The mother asked,

"It doesn't soil the underwear more than other skins, this black skin?"

"Not more than your own, as it is her proper color."

Then, after many other questions, it was agreed that the parents should see this girl before coming to any decision, and that the young fellow, whose term of military service would be over in a month, should bring her to the house in order that they might examine her and decide by talking the matter over whether or not she was too dark to enter the Boitelle family.

Antoine accordingly announced that on Sunday, the 22nd of May, the day of his discharge, he would start for Tourteville with his sweetheart.

She had put on, for this journey to the house of her lover's parents, her most beautiful and most gaudy clothes, in which yellow, red, and blue were the prevailing colors, so that she looked as if she were adorned for a national festival.

At the terminus, as they were leaving Havre, people stared at her, and Boitelle was proud of giving his arm to a person who commanded so much attention. Then, in the third-class carriage, in which she took a seat by his side, she aroused so much astonishment among the country folks that the people in the adjoining compartments stood up on their benches to look at her over the wooden partition which divides the compartments. A child, at sight of her, began to cry with terror, another concealed his face in his mother's apron. Everything went off well, however, up to their arrival at their destination. But, when the train slackened its rate of motion as they drew near Yvetot, Antoine felt ill at ease, as he would have done at a review when he did not know his drill practice. Then, as he leaned his head out, he recognized in the distance his father, holding the bridle of the horse harnessed to a carryall, and his mother, who had come for-

ward to the latticed partition, behind which stood those who were expecting friends.

He alighted first, gave his hand to his sweetheart, and, holding himself erect, as if he were escorting a general, he went to meet his family.

The mother, on seeing this black lady in variegated costume in her son's company, remained so stupefied that she could not open her mouth; and the father found it hard to hold the horse, which the engine or the negress caused to rear continuously. But Antoine, suddenly filled with unmixed joy at seeing once more the old people, rushed forward with open arms, embraced his mother, embraced his father, in spite of the nag's fright, and then turning toward his companion, at whom the passengers on the platform stopped to stare with amazement, he proceeded to explain:

" Here she is! I told you that, at first sight, she is not attractive; but as soon as you know her, I can assure you there's not a better sort in the whole world. Say good morning to her so that she may not feel badly."

Thereupon, Mère Boitelle, almost frightened out of her wits, made a sort of curtsey, while the father took off his cap, murmuring,

" I wish you good luck! "

Then, without further delay, they climbed into the carryall, the two women at the back on seats which made them jump up and down as the vehicle went jolting along the road, and the two men in front on the front seat.

Nobody spoke. Antoine, ill at ease, whistled a barrack-room air; his father whipped the nag; and his mother, from where she sat in the corner, kept casting sly glances at the negress, whose forehead

and cheekbones shone in the sunlight like well-polished shoes.

Wishing to break the ice, Antoine turned round.

"Well," said he, "we don't seem inclined to talk."

"We must have time," replied the old woman.

He went on,

"Come! Tell us the little story about that hen of yours that laid eight eggs."

It was a funny anecdote of long standing in the family. But, as his mother still remained silent, paralyzed by her emotion, he undertook himself to tell the story, laughing as he did so at the memorable incident. The father, who knew it by heart, brightened at the opening words of the narrative; his wife soon followed his example; and the negress herself, when he reached the drollest part of it, suddenly gave vent to a laugh, such a loud, rolling torrent of laughter that the horse, becoming excited, broke into a gallop for a while.

This served to cement their acquaintance. They all began to chat.

They had scarcely reached the house and had all alighted, when Antoine conducted his sweetheart to a room, so that she might take off her dress, to avoid staining it, as she was going to prepare a nice dish, intended to win the old people's affections through their stomachs. He drew his parents outside the house, and, with beating heart, asked:

"Well, what do you say now?"

The father said nothing. The mother, less timid, exclaimed:

"She is too black. No, indeed, this is too much for me. It turns my blood."

"You will get used to it," said Antoine.

" Perhaps so, but not at first."

They went into the house, where the good woman was somewhat affected at the spectacle of the negress engaged in cooking. She at once proceeded to assist her, with petticoats tucked up, active in spite of her age.

The meal was an excellent one, very long, very enjoyable. When they were taking a turn after dinner, Antoine took his father aside.

" Well, dad, what do you say about it? "

The peasant took care never to compromise himself.

" I have no opinion about it. Ask your mother."

So Antoine went back to his mother, and, detaining her behind the rest, said:

" Well, mother, what do you think of her? "

" My poor lad, she is really too black. If she were only a little less black, I would not go against you, but this is too much. One would think it was Satan! "

He did not press her, knowing how obstinate the old woman had always been, but he felt a tempest of disappointment sweeping over his heart. He was turning over in his mind what he ought to do, what plan he could devise, surprised, moreover, that she had not conquered them already as she had captivated himself. And they, all four, walked along through the wheat-fields, having gradually relapsed into silence. Whenever they passed a fence they saw a countryman sitting on the stile, and a group of brats climbed up to stare at them, and every one rushed out into the road to see the " black " whom young Boitelle had brought home with him. At a distance they noticed people scampering across the fields just as when the drum beats to draw public

attention to some living phenomenon. Père and Mère Boitelle, alarmed at this curiosity, which was exhibited everywhere through the country at their approach, quickened their pace, walking side by side, and leaving their son far behind. His dark companion asked what his parents thought of her.

He hesitatingly replied that they had not yet made up their minds.

But on the village green people rushed out of all the houses in a flutter of excitement; and, at the sight of the gathering crowd, old Boitelle took to his heels, and regained his abode, while Antoine, swelling with rage, his sweetheart on his arm, advanced majestically under the staring eyes, which opened wide in amazement.

He understood that it was at an end, and there was no hope for him, that he could not marry his negress. She also understood it; and as they drew near the farmhouse they both began to weep. As soon as they had got back to the house, she once more took off her dress to aid the mother in the household duties, and followed her everywhere, to the dairy, to the stable, to the hen-house, taking on herself the hardest part of the work, repeating always: "Let me do it, Madame Boitelle," so that, when night came on, the old woman, touched but inexorable, said to her son: "She is a good girl, all the same. It's a pity she is so black; but indeed she is too black. I could not get used to it. She must go back again. She is too, too black!"

And young Boitelle said to his sweetheart:

"She will not consent. She thinks you are too black. You must go back again. I will go with you to the train. No matter—don't fret. I am going to talk to them after you have started."

He then took her to the railway station, still cheering her with hope, and, when he had kissed her, he put her into the train, which he watched as it passed out of sight, his eyes swollen with tears.

In vain did he appeal to the old people. They would never give their consent.

And when he had told this story, which was known all over the country, Antoine Boitelle would always add:

"From that time forward I have had no heart for anything—for anything at all. No trade suited me any longer, and so I became what I am—a night scavenger."

People would say to him:

"Yet you got married."

"Yes, and I can't say that my wife didn't please me, seeing that I have fourteen children; but she is not the other one, oh, no—certainly not! The other one, mark you, my negress, she had only to give me one glance, and I felt as if I were in Heaven. . . ."

# THE LITTLE CASK

HE was a tall man of forty or thereabout, this Jules Chicot, the innkeeper of Épreville, with a red face and a round stomach, and said by those who knew him to be a smart business man. He stopped his buggy in front of Mother Magloire's farmhouse, and, hitching the horse to the gatepost, went in at the gate.

Chicot owned some land adjoining that of the old woman, which he had been coveting for a long while, and had tried in vain to buy a score of times, but she had always obstinately refused to part with it.

"I was born here, and here I mean to die," was all she said.

He found her peeling potatoes outside the farmhouse door. She was a woman of about seventy-two, very thin, shriveled and wrinkled, almost dried up in fact, and much bent, but as active and untiring as a girl. Chicot patted her on the back in a friendly fashion, and then sat down by her on a stool.

"Well, mother, you are always pretty well and hearty, I am glad to see."

"Nothing to complain of, considering, thank you. And how are you, Monsieur Chicot?"

"Oh! pretty well, thank you, except a few rheumatic pains occasionally; otherwise I have nothing to complain of."

"So much the better!"

And she said no more, while Chicot watched her going on with her work. Her crooked, knotty fingers, hard as a lobster's claws, seized the tubers, which were lying in a pail, as if they had been a pair of pincers, and she peeled them rapidly, cutting off long strips of skin with an old knife which she held in the other hand, throwing the potatoes into the water as they were done. Three daring fowls jumped one after the other into her lap, seized a bit of peel, and then ran away as fast as their legs would carry them with it in their beaks.

Chicot seemed embarrassed, anxious, with something on the tip of his tongue which he could not say. At last he said hurriedly:

"Listen, Mother Magloire——"

"Well, what is it?"

"You are quite sure that you do not want to sell your land?"

"Certainly not; you may make up your mind to that. What I have said I have said, so don't refer to it again."

"Very well; only I think I know of an arrangement that might suit us both very well."

"What is it?"

"Just this. You shall sell it to me, and keep it all the same. You don't understand? Very well, then follow me in what I am going to say."

The old woman left off peeling her potatoes, and looked at the innkeeper attentively from under her heavy eyebrows, and he went on:

"Let me explain myself. Every month I will give you a hundred and fifty francs. You understand me, I suppose? Every month I will come and bring you thirty crowns,* and it will not make the slightest difference in your life—not the very slightest. You will have your own home just as you have now, need not trouble yourself about me, and will owe me nothing; all you will have to do will be to take my money. Will that arrangement suit you?"

He looked at her good-humoredly, one might almost have said benevolently, and the old woman returned his looks distrustfully, as if she suspected a trap, and said:

"It seems all right as far as I am concerned, but it will not give you the farm."

"Never mind about that," he said; "you may remain here as long as it pleases God Almighty to let you live; it will be your home. Only you will sign a deed before a lawyer making it over to me after your death. You have no children, only nephews and nieces for whom you don't care a straw. Will that suit you? You will keep everything during your life, and I will give you the thirty crowns a month. It is pure gain as far as you are concerned."

The old woman was surprised, rather uneasy, but, nevertheless, very much tempted to agree, and answered:

"I don't say that I will not agree to it, but I must think about it. Come back in a week, and we

* The old name, still applied locally to a five-franc piece.

will talk it over again, and I will then give you my definite answer."

And Chicot went off, as happy as a king who had conquered an empire.

Mother Magloire was thoughtful, and did not sleep at all that night; in fact, for four days she was in a fever of hesitation. She suspected that there was something underneath the offer which was not to her advantage; but then the thought of thirty crowns a month, of all those coins chinking in her apron, falling to her, as it were, from the skies, without her doing anything for it, aroused her covetousness.

She went to the notary and told him about it. He advised her to accept Chicot's offer, but said she ought to ask for an annuity of fifty instead of thirty, as her farm was worth sixty thousand francs at the lowest calculation.

"If you live for fifteen years longer," he said, "even then he will only have paid forty-five thousand francs for it."

The old woman trembled with joy at this prospect of getting fifty crowns a month; but she was still suspicious, fearing some trick, and she remained a long time with the lawyer asking questions without being able to make up her mind to go. At last she gave him instructions to draw up the deed, and returned home with her head in a whirl, just as if she had drunk four jugs of new cider.

When Chicot came again to receive her answer she declared, after a deal of persuading, that she could not make up her mind to agree to his proposal, though she was all the time trembling lest he should not consent to give the fifty crowns; but at

last, when he grew urgent, she told him what she expected for her farm.

He looked surprised and disappointed, and refused.

Then, in order to convince him, she began to talk about the probable duration of her life.

"I am certainly not likely to live more than five or six years longer. I am nearly seventy-three, and far from strong, even considering my age. The other evening I thought I was going to die, and could hardly manage to crawl into bed."

But Chicot was not going to be taken in.

"Come, come, old lady, you are as strong as the church tower, and will live till you are a hundred at least; you will, no doubt, see me put under ground first."

The whole day was spent in discussing the money, and as the old woman would not give in, the innkeeper consented to give the fifty crowns, and she insisted upon having ten crowns over and above to strike the bargain.

Three years passed, and the old dame did not seem to have grown a day older. Chicot was in despair, and it seemed to him as if he had been paying that annuity for fifty years, that he had been taken in, done, ruined. From time to time he went to see the old lady, just as one goes in July to see when the harvest is likely to begin. She always met him with a cunning look, and one might have supposed that she was congratulating herself on the trick she had played him. Seeing how well and hearty she seemed, he very soon got into his buggy again, growling to himself:

"Will you never die, you old hag?"

He did not know what to do, and he felt inclined

to strangle her when he saw her. He hated her with a ferocious, cunning hatred, the hatred of a peasant who has been robbed, and began to cast about for some means of getting rid of her.

One day he came to see her again, rubbing his hands as he did the first time he proposed the bargain, and, after having chatted for a few minutes, he said:

"Why do you never come and have a bit of dinner at my place when you are in Épreville? The people are talking about it, and saying that we are not on friendly terms, and that pains me. You know it will cost you nothing if you come, for I don't look at the price of a dinner. Come whenever you feel inclined; I shall be very glad to see you."

Old Mother Magloire did not need to be asked twice, and the next day but one, as she had to go to the town in any case, it being market-day, she let her man drive her to Chicot's place, where the buggy was put in the barn while she went in to the house to get her dinner.

The innkeeper was delighted and treated her like a lady, giving her roast fowl, black pudding, leg of mutton, and bacon and cabbage. But she ate next to nothing. She had always been a small eater, and had generally lived on a little soup and a crust of bread and butter.

Chicot was disappointed and pressed her to eat more, but she refused, and she would drink little, and declined coffee, so he asked her:

"But surely, you will take a little drop of brandy or liqueur?"

"Well, as to that, I don't know that I will refuse." Whereupon he shouted out:

"Rosalie, bring the superfine brandy—*the special*—you know."

The servant appeared, carrying a long bottle ornamented with a paper vine-leaf, and he filled two liqueur glasses.

"Just try that; you will find it first rate."

The good woman drank it slowly in sips, so as to make the pleasure last all the longer, and when she had finished her glass, she said:

"Yes, that is first rate!"

Almost before she had said it Chicot had poured her out another glassful. She wished to refuse, but it was too late, and she drank it very slowly, as she had done the first, and he asked her to have a third. She objected, but he persisted.

"It is as mild as milk, you know; I can drink ten or a dozen glasses without any ill effects; it goes down like sugar, and does not go to the head; one would think that it evaporated on the tongue. It is the most wholesome thing you can drink."

She took it, for she really enjoyed it, but she left half the glass.

Then Chicot, in an excess of generosity, said:

"Look here, as it is so much to your taste, I will give you a small keg of it, just to show that you and I are still excellent friends." So she took one away with her, feeling slightly overcome by the effects of what she had drunk.

The next day the innkeeper drove into her yard, and took a little iron-hooped keg out of his gig. He insisted on her tasting the contents, to make sure it was the same delicious article, and, when they had each of them drunk three more glasses, he said, as he was going away:

"Well, you know when it is all gone there is

more left; don't be modest, for I shall not mind. The sooner it is finished the better pleased I shall be."

Four days later he came again. The old woman was outside her door cutting up the bread for her soup.

He went up to her and put his face close to hers, so that he might smell her breath; and when he smelt the alcohol he felt pleased.

"I suppose you will give me a glass of the special?" he said. And they had three glasses each.

Soon, however, it began to be whispered abroad that Mother Magloire was in the habit of getting drunk all by herself. She was picked up in her kitchen, then in her yard, then in the roads in the neighborhood, and she was often brought home like a log.

The innkeeper did not go near her any more, and, when people spoke to him about her, he used to say, putting on a distressed look:

"It is a great pity that she should have taken to drink at her age; but when people get old there is no remedy. It will be the death of her in the long run."

And it certainly was the death of her. She died the next winter. About Christmas time she fell down, unconscious, in the snow, and was found dead the next morning.

And when Chicot came in for the farm, he said:

"It was very stupid of her; if she had not taken to drink she would probably have lived ten years longer."

# THE ACCURSED BREAD

## I

DADDY TAILLE had three daughters: Anna, the eldest, who was scarcely ever mentioned in the family; Rose, the second girl, who was eighteen, and Clara, the youngest, who was a girl of fifteen.

Old Taille was a widower and a foreman in M. Lebrument's button manufactory. He was a very upright man, very well thought of, abstemious; in fact, a sort of model workman. He lived at Havre, in the Rue d'Angoulême.

When Anna ran away from home the old man flew into a fearful rage. He threatened to kill the head clerk in a large draper's establishment in that town, whom he suspected. After a time, when he was told by various people that she was very steady and investing money in government securities, that she was no gadabout, but was a

great friend of Monsieur Dubois, who was a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, the father was appeased.

He even showed some anxiety as to how she was getting on, and asked some of her old friends who had been to see her; and when told that she had her own furniture, and that her mantelpiece was covered with vases and the walls with pictures, that there were clocks and carpets everywhere, he gave a broad, contented smile. He had been working for thirty years to get together a wretched five or six thousand francs. This girl was evidently no fool.

One fine morning the son of Touchard, the cooper, at the other end of the street, came and asked him for the hand of Rose, the second girl. The old man's heart began to beat, for the Touchards were rich and in a good position. He was decidedly lucky with his girls.

The marriage was agreed upon, and it was settled that it should be a grand affair, and the wedding dinner was to be held at Sainte-Adresse, at Mother Iusa's restaurant. It would cost a lot, certainly; but never mind, it did not matter just for once in a way.

But one morning, just as the old man was going home to breakfast with his two daughters, the door opened suddenly, and Anna appeared. She was well dressed, and looked undeniably pretty and nice. She threw her arms round her father's neck before he could say a word, then fell into her sister's arms with many tears, and then asked for a plate, so that she might share the family soup. Taille was moved to tears in his turn, and said several times:

"That is right, dear; that is right."

Then she told them about herself. She did not wish Rose's wedding to take place at Sainte-Adresse —certainly not. It should take place at her house, and would cost her father nothing. She had settled everything and arranged everything, so it was " no good to say any more about it—there! "

" Very well, my dear! very well! " the old man said; " we will leave it so." But then he felt some doubt. Would the Touchards consent? But Rose, the bride-elect, was surprised, and asked: " Why should they object, I should like to know? Just leave that to me; I will talk to Philip about it."

She mentioned it to her lover the very same day, and he declared it would suit him exactly. Father and Mother Touchard were naturally delighted at the idea of a good dinner which would cost them nothing, and said:

" You may be quite sure that everything will be in first-rate style."

They asked to be allowed to bring a friend, Madame Florence, the cook on the first floor, and Anna agreed to everything.

The wedding was fixed for the last Tuesday of the month.

## II

After the civil formalities and the religious ceremony, the wedding party went to Anna's house. Among those whom the Tailles had brought was a cousin of a certain age, a Monsieur Sauvetanin, a man given to philosophical reflections, serious, and always very self-possessed, and Madame Lamonouis, an old aunt.

Monsieur Sauvetanin had been told off to give

Anna his arm, as they were looked upon as the two most important persons in the company.

As soon as they had arrived at the door of Anna's house she let go her companion's arm, and ran on ahead, saying: "I will show you the way," and ran upstairs while the invited guests followed more slowly; and, when they got upstairs, she stood on one side to let them pass, and they rolled their eyes and turned their heads in all directions to admire this mysterious and luxurious dwelling.

The table was laid in the drawing-room, as the dining-room had been thought too small. Extra knives, forks, and spoons had been hired from a neighboring restaurant, and decanters stood full of wine under the rays of the sun which shone in through the window.

The ladies went into the bedroom to take off their shawls and bonnets, and Father Touchard, who was standing at the door, made funny and suggestive signs to the men, with many a wink and nod. Daddy Taille, who thought a great deal of himself, looked with fatherly pride at his child's well-furnished rooms, and went from one to the other, holding his hat in his hand, making a mental inventory of everything, and walking like a verger in a church.

Anna went backward and forward, ran about giving orders and hurrying on the wedding feast. Soon she appeared at the door of the dining-room, and cried: "Come here, all of you, for a moment," and as the twelve guests entered the room they saw twelve glasses of Madeira on a small table.

Rose and her husband had their arms round each other's waist, and were kissing each other in every corner. Monsieur Sauvetanin never took his eyes off Anna.

They sat down, and the wedding breakfast began, the relations sitting at one end of the table and the young people at the other. Madame Touchard, the mother, presided on the right, and the bride on the left. Anna looked after everybody, saw that the glasses were kept filled and the plates well supplied. The guests evidently felt a certain respectful embarrassment at the sight of all the sumptuousness of the rooms and at the lavish manner in which they were treated. They all ate heartily of the good things provided, but there were no jokes such as are prevalent at weddings of that sort; it was all too grand, and it made them feel uncomfortable. Old Madame Touchard, who was fond of a bit of fun, tried to enliven matters a little, and at the beginning of the dessert she exclaimed: "I say, Philip, do sing us something." The neighbors in their street considered that he had the finest voice in all Havre.

The bridegroom got up, smiled, and, turning to his sister-in-law, from politeness and gallantry, tried to think of something suitable for the occasion, something serious and correct, to harmonize with the seriousness of the repast.

Anna had a satisfied look on her face, and leaned back in her chair to listen, and all assumed looks of attention, though prepared to smile should smiles be called for.

The singer announced *The Accursed Bread,* and, extending his right arm, which made his coat ruck up into his neck, he began.

It was decidedly long, three verses of eight lines each, with the last line and the last but one repeated twice.

All went well for the first two verses; they were

the usual commonplaces about bread gained by honest labor and by dishonesty. The aunt and the bride wept outright. The cook, who was present, at the end of the first verse looked at a roll which she held in her hand, with streaming eyes, as if it applied to her, while all applauded vigorously. At the end of the second verse the two servants, who were standing with their backs to the wall, joined loudly in the chorus, and the aunt and the bride wept outright. Daddy Taille blew his nose with the noise of a trombone, and old Touchard brandished a whole loaf half over the table, and the cook shed silent tears upon the crust which she was still holding.

Amid the general emotion Monsieur Sauvetanin said:

"That is the right sort of song; very different from the nasty, risky things one generally hears at weddings."

Anna, who was visibly affected, kissed her hand to her sister, and pointed to her husband with an affectionate nod, as if to congratulate her.

Intoxicated by his success, the young man continued, and unfortunately the last verse contained words about the "bread of dishonor" gained by young girls who had been led astray. No one took up the refrain about this bread, supposed to be eaten with tears, except old Touchard and the two servants. Anna had grown deadly pale, and cast down her eyes, while the bridegroom looked from one to the other without understanding the reason for this sudden coldness, and the cook hastily dropped the crust as if it were poisoned.

Monsieur Sauvetanin said solemnly, in order to save the situation: "That last couplet is not at all

necessary ''; and Daddy Taille, who had got red up to his ears, looked round the table fiercely.

Then Anna, her eyes swimming in tears, told the servants, in the faltering voice of a woman trying to stifle her sobs, to bring the champagne.

All the guests were suddenly seized with exuberant joy, and all their faces became radiant again. And when old Touchard, who had seen, felt, and understood nothing of what was going on, and pointing to the guests so as to emphasize his words, sang the last words of the refrain:

'' Children, I warn you all to eat not of that bread,'' the whole company, when they saw the champagne bottles, with their necks covered with gold foil, appear, burst out singing, as if electrified by the sight:

'' Children, I warn you all to eat not of that bread.''

## THE COLONEL'S IDEAS

BY my word," said Colonel Laporte, "although I am old and gouty, my legs as stiff as two pieces of wood, yet if a pretty woman were to tell me to go through the eye of a needle, I believe I should take a jump at it, like a clown through a hoop. I shall die like that; it is in the blood. I am an old beau, one of the old school, and the sight of a woman, a pretty woman, stirs me to the tips of my toes. There!

"And then we are all very much alike in France; we still remain knights, knights of love and of fortune, since God has been abolished, whose bodyguard we really were. But nobody can ever get woman out of our hearts; there she is, and there she will remain, and we love her, and shall continue to love her, and go on committing all kinds of frolics on her account, as long as there is a France on the map of Europe; and even if France were to be wiped off the map, there would always be Frenchmen left.

"When I am in the presence of a woman, of a pretty woman, I feel capable of anything. By Jove! When I feel her looks penetrating me, her confounded looks which set your blood on fire, I should like to do I don't know what; to fight a duel, to have a row, to smash the furniture, in order to show that I am the strongest, the bravest, the most daring, and the most devoted of men.

"But I am not the only one, certainly not; the whole French army is like me, I swear to you. From the common soldier to the general, we all start forward, and go to the very end, when there is a woman in the case, a pretty woman. Do you remember what Joan of Arc made us do formerly? Come, I will make a bet that if a pretty woman had taken command of the army on the eve of Sedan, when Marshal MacMahon was wounded, we should have broken through the Prussian lines, by Jove! and had a drink out of their guns.

"It was not a Trochu, but a Sainte-Geneviève, who was needed in Paris; and I remember a little anecdote of the war which proves that we are capable of everything in presence of a woman.

"I was a captain, a simple captain, at the time, and I was in command of a detachment of scouts, who were retreating through a district which swarmed with Prussians. We were surrounded, pursued, tired out, and half dead with fatigue and hunger; but we were bound to reach Bar-sur-Tain before the morrow, otherwise we should be shot, cut down, massacred. I do not know how we managed to escape so far. However, we had ten leagues to go during the night, ten leagues through the night, ten leagues through the snow, and with empty stomachs, and I thought to myself:

"'It is all over; my poor devils of fellows will never be able to do it.'

"We had eaten nothing since the day before, and the whole day long we remained hidden in a barn, huddled close together, so as not to feel the cold so much; unable to speak or even move, and sleeping by fits and starts, as one does when worn out with fatigue.

"It was dark by five o'clock, that wan darkness of the snow, and I shook my men. Some of them would not get up; they were almost incapable of moving or of standing upright; their joints were stiff from cold and hunger.

"Before us there was a large expanse of flat, bare country; the snow was still falling like a curtain, in large, white flakes, which concealed everything under a thick, frozen coverlet, a coverlet of frozen wool. One might have thought that it was the end of the world.

"'Come, my lads, let us start.'

"They looked at the thick white flakes that were coming down, and they seemed to think: 'We have had enough of this; we may just as well die here!' Then I took out my revolver, and said:

"'I will shoot the first man who flinches.' And so they set off, but very slowly, like men whose legs were of very little use to them, and I sent four of them three hundred yards ahead, to scout, and the others followed pell-mell, walking at random and without any order. I put the strongest in the rear, with orders to quicken the pace of the sluggards with the points of their bayonets . . . in the back.

"The snow seemed as if it were going to bury us alive; it powdered our képis and cloaks without melting, and made phantoms of us, a kind of spec-

tres of dead, weary soldiers. I said to myself: 'We shall never get out of this except by a miracle.'

"Sometimes we had to stop for a few minutes, on account of those who could not follow us, and then we heard nothing except the falling snow, that vague, almost undiscernible sound made by the falling flakes. Some of the men shook themselves; others did not move, and so I gave the order to set off again. They shouldered their rifles, and with weary feet we resumed our march, when, suddenly, the scouts fell back. Something had alarmed them; they had heard voices in front of them. I sent forward six men and a sergeant, and waited.

"All at once a shrill cry, a woman's cry, pierced through the heavy silence of the snow, and in a few minutes they brought back two prisoners, an old man and a girl, whom I questioned in a low voice. They were escaping from the Prussians, who had occupied their house during the evening, and had got drunk. The father was on his daughter's account, and, without even telling their servants, they had made their escape into the darkness. I saw immediately that they belonged to the better class. I invited them to accompany us, and we started off again, the old man who knew the road acting as our guide.

"It had ceased snowing; the stars appeared, and the cold became intense. The girl, who was leaning on her father's arm, walked wearily, and with jerks, and several times she murmured:

"'I have no feeling at all in my feet;' and I suffered more than she did, to see that poor little woman dragging herself like that through the snow. But suddenly she stopped, and said:

"'Father, I am so tired that I cannot go any further.'

"The old man wanted to carry her, but he could not even lift her up, and she sank to the ground with a deep sigh. We all gathered round her, and, as for me, I stamped my foot in perplexity, not knowing what to do, and being unwilling to abandon that man and girl like that, when suddenly one of the soldiers, a Parisian whom they had nicknamed Pratique, said:

"'Come, comrades, we must carry the young lady, otherwise we shall not show ourselves Frenchmen, confound it!'

"I really believe that I swore with pleasure. 'That is very good of you, my children,' I said; 'and I will take my share of the burden.'

"We could indistinctly see, through the darkness, the trees of a little wood on the left. Several of the men went into it, and soon came back with a bundle of branches made into a litter.

"'Who will lend his cape? It is for a pretty girl, comrades,' Pratique said, and ten cloaks were thrown to him. In a moment the girl was lying, warm and comfortable, among them, and was raised upon six shoulders. I placed myself at their head, on the right, well pleased with my position.

"We started off much more briskly, as if we had had a drink of wine, and I even heard some jokes. A woman is quite enough to electrify Frenchmen, you see. The soldiers, who had become cheerful and warm, had almost reformed their ranks, and an old *franc-tireur* who was following the litter, waiting for his turn to replace the first of his comrades who might give out, said to one of his neighbors, loud enough for me to hear:

" ' I am not a young man, now; but by ——, there is nothing like the women to put courage into you! '

" We went on, almost without stopping, until three o'clock in the morning, when suddenly our scouts fell back once more, and soon the whole detachment showed nothing but a vague shadow on the ground, as the men lay on the snow. I gave my orders in a low voice, and heard the harsh, metallic sound of the cocking of rifles. For there, in the middle of the plain, some strange object was moving about. It looked like some enormous animal running about, now stretching out like a serpent, now coiling itself into a ball, darting to the right, then to the left, then stopping, and presently starting off again. But presently that wandering shape came nearer, and I saw a dozen lancers at full gallop, one behind the other. They had lost their way, and were trying to find it.

" They were so near by that time that I could hear the loud breathing of their horses, the clinking of their swords, and the creaking of their saddles, and cried: ' Fire! '

" Fifty rifle-shots broke the stillness of the night, then there were four or five reports, and at last one single shot was heard, and when the smoke had cleared away, we saw that the twelve men and nine horses had fallen. Three of the animals were galloping away at a furious pace, and one of them was dragging the dead body of its rider, which rebounded from the ground in a terrible manner; his foot had caught in the stirrup.

" One of the soldiers behind me gave a terrible laugh, and said: ' There will be some widows there! '

" Perhaps he was married. And a third added: ' It did not take long! '

"A head emerged from the litter.

"'What is the matter?' she asked; 'are you fighting?'

"'It is nothing, Mademoiselle,' I replied; 'we have got rid of a dozen Prussians!'

"'Poor fellows!' she said. But as she was cold, she quickly disappeared beneath the cloaks again, and we started off once more. We marched on for a long time, and at last the sky began to grow lighter. The snow became quite clear, luminous, and glistening; and a rosy tint appeared in the east. Suddenly a voice in the distance cried:

"'Who goes there?'

"The whole detachment halted, and I advanced to give the countersign. We had reached the French lines, and, as my men defiled before the outpost, a commandant on horseback, whom I had informed of what had taken place, asked in a sonorous voice, as he saw the litter pass him: 'What have you there?'

"And immediately a small head, covered with light hair, appeared, disheveled and smiling, and replied:

"'It is I, Monsieur.'

"At this the men raised a hearty laugh, and we felt quite light-hearted, while Pratique, who was walking by the side of the litter, waved his képi, and shouted:

"'*Vive la France!*' And I felt really affected. I do not know why, except that I thought it a pretty and gallant thing to say.

"It seemed to me as if we had just saved the whole of France, and had done something that other men could not have done, something simple, and really patriotic. I shall never forget that little face, you may be sure; and if I had to give my opin-

ion about abolishing drums, trumpets, and bugles, I should propose to replace them in every regiment by a pretty girl, and that would be even better than playing the *Marseillaise*. By Jove! It would put some spirit into a trooper to have a Madonna like that, a live Madonna, by the Colonel's side."

He was silent for a few moments, and then continued, with an air of conviction, and jerking his head:

"All the same, we are very fond of women, we Frenchmen!"

## BERTHA

DOCTOR BONNET, my old friend—one sometimes has friends older than one's self—had often invited me to spend some time with him at Riom, and, as I did not know Auvergne, I made up my mind to visit him in the summer of 1876.

I arrived by the morning train, and the first person I saw on the platform was the doctor. He was dressed in a gray suit, and wore a soft, black, wide-brimmed, high-crowned felt hat, narrow at the top like a chimney pot, a hat which hardly any one except an Auvergnat would wear, and which reminded one of a charcoal-burner. Dressed like that, the doctor had the appearance of an old young man, with his spare body under his thin coat, and his large head covered with white hair.

He embraced me with that evident pleasure

which country people feel when they meet long-expected friends, and, stretching out his arm, he said proudly:

"This is Auvergne!" I saw nothing before me except a range of mountains, whose summits, which resembled truncated cones, must have been extinct volcanoes.

Then, pointing to the name of the station, he said:

"*Riom,* the fatherland of magistrates, the pride of the magistracy, and which ought rather to be the fatherland of doctors."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied with a laugh. "If you transpose the letters, you have the Latin word *mori,* to die. That is the reason why I settled here, my young friend."

And, delighted at his own joke, he carried me off, rubbing his hands.

As soon as I had swallowed a cup of coffee, he made me go and see the town. I admired the druggist's house, and the other noted houses, which were all black, but as pretty as bric-à-brac, with their façades of sculptured stone. I admired the statue of the Virgin, the patroness of butchers, and he told me an amusing story about this, which I will relate some other time, and then Doctor Bonnet said to me:

"I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes while I go and see a patient, and then I will take you to Chatel-Guyon, so as to show you the general aspect of the town, and all the mountain chain of the Puy-de-Dôme, before lunch. You can wait for me outside; I shall only go upstairs and come down immediately."

He left me outside one of those old, gloomy, silent, melancholy houses, which one sees in the provinces, and this one appeared to look particularly sinister, and I soon discovered the reason. All the large windows on the first floor were half boarded up with wooden shutters. The upper part of them alone could be opened, as if one had wished to prevent the people who were locked up in that huge stone trunk from looking into the street.

When the doctor came down again, I told him how it had struck me, and he replied:

"You are quite right; the poor creature who is living there must never see what is going on outside. She is a madwoman, or rather an idiot, what you Normans would call a *Niente*. It is a miserable story, but a very singular pathological case at the same time. Shall I tell you?"

I begged him to do so, and he continued:

"Twenty years ago the owners of this house, who were my patients, had a daughter who was like all other girls, but I soon discovered that while her body became admirably developed, her intellect remained stationary.

"She began to walk very early, but she could not talk. At first I thought she was deaf, but I soon discovered that, although she heard perfectly, she did not understand anything that was said to her. Violent noises made her start and frightened her, without her understanding how they were caused.

"She grew up into a superb woman, but she was dumb, from an absolute want of intellect. I tried all means to introduce a gleam of intelligence into her brain, but nothing succeeded. I thought I noticed that she knew her nurse, though as soon as she was weaned, she failed to recognize her mother.

She could never pronounce that word which is the first that children utter and the last which soldiers murmur when they are dying on the field of battle. She sometimes tried to talk, but she produced nothing but incoherent sounds.

" When the weather was fine, she laughed continually, and emitted low cries which might be compared to the twittering of birds; when it rained she cried and moaned in a mournful, terrifying manner, which sounded like the howling of a dog when a death occurs in a house.

" She was fond of rolling on the grass, as young animals do, and of running about madly, and she used to clap her hands every morning, when the sun shone into her room, and would jump out of bed and insist, by signs, on being dressed as quickly as possible, so that she might get out.

" She did not appear to distinguish between people, between her mother and her nurse, or between her father and me, or between the coachman and the cook. I particularly liked her parents, who were very unhappy on her account, and went to see them nearly every day. I dined with them quite frequently, which enabled me to remark that Bertha (they had called her Bertha) seemed to recognize the various dishes, and to prefer some to others. At that time she was twelve years old, but as fully formed in figure as a girl of eighteen, and taller than I was. Then the idea struck me of developing her greediness, and by this means try to produce some slight powers of distinguishing in her mind, and to force her, by the diversity of flavors, if not to reason, at any rate to arrive at instinctive distinctions, which would of themselves constitute a kind of process that was necessary to thought. Later

on, by appealing to her passions, and by carefully making use of those which could serve us, we might hope to obtain a kind of reaction on her intellect, and by degrees increase the insensible action of her brain.

"One day I put two plates before her, one of soup, and the other of very sweet vanilla cream. I made her taste each of them successively, and then I let her choose for herself, and she ate the plate of cream. In a short time I made her very greedy, so greedy that it appeared as if the only idea she had in her head was the desire for eating. She perfectly recognized the various dishes, and stretched out her hands toward those that she liked, and took hold of them eagerly, and she used to cry when they were taken from her. Then I thought I would try to teach her to come to the dining-room when the dinner-bell rang. It took a long time, but I succeeded in the end. In her vacant intellect there was a fixed correlation between the sound and her taste, a correspondence between two senses, an appeal from one to the other, and consequently a sort of connection of ideas—if one can call that kind of instinctive hyphen between two organic functions an idea—and so I carried my experiments further, and taught her, with much difficulty, to recognize meal times by the clock.

"It was impossible for me for a long time to attract her attention to the hands, but I succeeded in making her remark the clockwork and the striking apparatus. The means I employed were very simple; I asked them not to have the bell rung for lunch, and everybody got up and went into the dining-room when the little brass hammer struck twelve o'clock, but I found great difficulty in making

her learn to count the strokes. She ran to the door each time she heard the clock strike, but by degrees she learned that all the strokes had not the same value as far as regarded meals, and she frequently fixed her eyes, guided by her ears, on the dial of the clock.

"When I noticed that I took care every day at twelve and at six o'clock to place my fingers on the figures twelve and six, as soon as the moment she was waiting for had arrived, and I soon noticed that she attentively followed the motion of the small brass hands, which I had often turned in her presence.

" She had understood! Perhaps I ought rather to say that she had grasped the idea. I had succeeded in getting the knowledge, or, rather, the sensation, of the time into her, just as is the case with carp, who certainly have no clocks, when they are fed every day exactly at the same time.

" When once I had obtained that result all the clocks and watches in the house occupied her attention almost exclusively. She spent her time in looking at them, in listening to them, and in waiting for meal-time, and once something very funny happened. The striking apparatus of a pretty little Louis XVI clock that hung at the head of her bed having got out of order, she noticed it. She sat for twenty minutes with her eyes on the hands, waiting for it to strike ten, but when the hand passed the figure she was astonished at not hearing anything; so stupefied was she, indeed, that she sat down, no doubt overwhelmed by a feeling of violent emotion such as attacks us in the face of some terrible catastrophe. And she had the wonderful patience to wait until eleven o'clock in order to see

what would happen, and as she naturally heard nothing, she was suddenly either seized with a wild fit of rage at having been deceived and imposed upon by appearances, or else overcome by that fear which some frightened creature feels at some terrible mystery, and by the furious impatience of a passionate individual who meets with some obstacle; she took up the tongs from the fireplace and struck the clock so violently that she broke it to pieces in a moment.

"It was evident, therefore, that her brain did act and calculate, obscurely it is true, and within very restricted limits, for I could never succeed in making her distinguish persons as she distinguished the time; and to stir her intellect, it was necessary to appeal to her passions, in the material sense of the word, and we soon had another, and alas! a very terrible proof of this!

* * * * * * *

"She had grown up into a splendid girl, a perfect type of a race, a sort of lovely and stupid Venus. She was sixteen, and I have rarely seen such perfection of form, such suppleness and such regular features. I said she was a Venus; yes, a fair, stout, vigorous Venus, with large, bright, vacant eyes, which were as blue as the flowers of the flax plant; she had a large mouth with full lips, the mouth of a glutton, of a sensualist, a mouth made for kisses. Well, one morning her father came into my consulting-room with a strange look on his face, and, sitting down without even replying to my greeting, he said:

"'I want to speak to you about a very serious

matter. . . . Would it be possible . . . would it be possible for Bertha to marry?'

"'Bertha to marry! . . . Why, it is quite impossible!'

"'Yes, I know, I know,' he replied. . . . "'But reflect, doctor . . . don't you think . . . perhaps . . . we hoped . . . if she had children . . . it would be a great shock to her, but a great happiness, and . . . who knows whether maternity might not rouse her intellect . . .'

"I was in a state of great perplexity. He was right, and it was possible that such a new situation, and that wonderful instinct of maternity which beats in the hearts of the lower animals, as it does in the heart of a woman, which makes the hen fly at a dog's jaws to defend her chickens, might bring about a revolution, an utter change in her vacant mind, and set the motionless mechanism of her thoughts into movement. And then, moreover, I immediately remembered a personal instance. Some years previously I had possessed a spaniel bitch who was so stupid that I could do nothing with her, but when she had had puppies she became, if not exactly intelligent, yet almost like many other dogs who have not been thoroughly broken.

"As soon as I foresaw the possibility of this the wish to get Bertha married grew in me, not so much out of friendship for her and her poor parents as from scientific curiosity. What would happen? It was a singular problem, and I said to her father:

"'Perhaps you are right. . . . You might make the attempt . . . but . . . but you will never find a man to consent to marry her.'

"'I have found somebody,' he said, in a low voice.'

"I was dumfounded, and said: 'Somebody really suitable? . . . Some one of your own rank and position in society?'

"'Decidedly,' he replied.

"'Oh! And may I ask his name?'

"'I came on purpose to tell you, and to consult you. It is Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles.'

"I felt inclined to exclaim: 'What a wretch!' but I held my tongue, and after a few moments' silence I said:

"'Oh! Very good. I see nothing against it.'

"The poor man shook me heartily by the hand.

"'She is to be married next month,' he said.

* * * * * * *

"Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles was a scapegrace of good family, who, after having spent all that he had inherited from his father, and having incurred debts by all kinds of doubtful means, had been trying to discover some other way of obtaining money, and he had discovered this method. He was a good-looking young fellow, and in capital health, but fast; one of that odious race of provincial fast men, and he appeared to me to be a sufficient sort of a husband, who could be got rid of later by making him an allowance. He came to the house to pay his addresses and to strut about before the idiot girl, who, however, seemed to please him. He brought her flowers, kissed her hands, sat at her feet, and looked at her with affectionate eyes; but she took no notice of any of his attentions, and did not make any distinction between him and the other persons who were about her.

"However, the marriage took place, and you may guess how my curiosity was aroused. I went

to see Bertha the next day to try and discover from her looks whether any feelings had been awakened in her, but I found her just the same as she was every day, wholly taken up with the clock and dinner, while he, on the contrary, appeared really in love, and tried to rouse his wife's spirits and affection by little endearments and such caresses as one bestows on a kitten. He could think of nothing better.

" I called upon the married couple pretty frequently, and I soon perceived that the young woman knew her husband, and gave him those eager looks which she had hitherto only bestowed on sweet dishes.

" She followed his movements, knew his step on the stairs or in the neighboring rooms, clapped her hands when he came in, and her face was changed and brightened by the flames of profound happiness and of desire.

" She loved him with her whole body and with all her soul to the very depths of her poor, weak soul, and with all her heart, that poor heart of some grateful animal. It was really a delightful and innocent picture of simple passion, of carnal and yet modest passion, such as nature had implanted in mankind before man had complicated and disfigured it by all the various shades of sentiment. But he soon grew tired of this ardent, beautiful, dumb creature, and did not spend more than an hour during the day with her, thinking it sufficient if he came home at night, and she began to suffer in consequence. She used to wait for him from morning till night with her eyes on the clock; she did not even look after the meals now, for he took all his away from home, Clermont, Chatel-Guyon, Royat,

no matter where, as long as he was not obliged to come home.

" She began to grow thin; every other thought, every other wish, every other expectation, and every confused hope disappeared from her mind, and the hours during which she did not see him became hours of terrible suffering to her. Soon he ceased to come home regularly at night; he spent them with women at the casino at Royat and did not come home until daybreak. But she never went to bed before he returned. She remained sitting motionless in an easy-chair, with her eyes fixed on the clock, which turned so slowly and regularly round the china face on which the hours were painted.

" She heard the trot of his horse in the distance and sat up with a start, and when he came into the room she got up with the movements of an automaton and pointed to the clock, as if to say: ' Look how late it is! '

" And he began to be afraid of this amorous and jealous, half-witted woman, and flew into a rage, as brutes do; and one night he even went so far as to strike her, so they sent for me. When I arrived she was writhing and screaming in a terrible crisis of pain, anger, passion, how do I know what? Can one tell what goes on in such undeveloped brains?

" I calmed her by subcutaneous injections of morphine, and forbade her to see that man again, for I saw clearly that marriage would infallibly kill her by degrees.

* * * * * * *

" Then she went mad! Yes, my dear friend, that idiot has gone mad. She is always thinking of him and waiting for him; she waits for him all

day and night, awake or asleep, at this very moment, ceaselessly. When I saw her getting thinner and thinner, and as she persisted in never taking her eyes off the clocks, I had them removed from the house. I thus make it impossible for her to count the hours, and to try to remember, from her indistinct reminiscences, at what time he used to come home formerly. I hope to destroy the recollection of it in time, and to extinguish that ray of thought which I kindled with so much difficulty.

"The other day I tried an experiment. I offered her my watch; she took it and looked at it for some time; then she began to scream terribly, as if the sight of that little object had suddenly aroused her recollection, which was beginning to grow more distinct. She is pitiably thin now, with hollow and glittering eyes, and she walks up and down ceaselessly, like a wild beast in its cage; I have had bars put to the windows, and have had the seats fixed to the floor so as to prevent her from looking to see whether he is coming.

"Oh! her poor parents! What a life they must lead!"

We had got to the top of the hill, and the doctor turned round and said to me:

"Look at Riom from here."

The gloomy town looked like some ancient city. Behind it a green, wooded plain studded with towns and villages, and bathed in a soft blue haze, extended until it was lost in the distance. Far away, on my right, there was a range of lofty mountains with round summits, or else cut off flat, as if with a sword, and the doctor began to enumerate the villages, towns, and hills, and to give me the history of all of them. But I did not listen to him; I was

thinking of nothing but the madwoman, and I only saw her. She seemed to be hovering over that vast extent of country like a mournful ghost, and I asked him abruptly:

"What has become of the husband?"

My friend seemed rather surprised, but after a few moments' hesitation, he replied:

"He is living at Royat, on an allowance that they made him, and is quite happy; he leads a very fast life."

As we were slowly going back, both of us silent and rather low-spirited, an English dogcart, drawn by a thoroughbred horse, came up behind us and passed us rapidly. The doctor took me by the arm:

"There he is," he said.

I saw nothing except a gray felt hat, cocked over one ear, above a pair of broad shoulders, driving off in a cloud of dust.

# RUSTIC TRIBUNALS

THE courtroom of Gorgeville is full of peasants who are standing along the walls, motionless, awaiting the opening.

There are tall ones and short ones, fat, red-faced ones and dried-up, thin ones. They have placed their baskets on the ground, and they stand there quiet and silent, engrossed by their own business. They have brought with them the odor of the stable and of perspiration, of sour milk and the dungheap. Flies are buzzing on the white ceiling. Through the open door can be heard the crowing of cocks.

On a sort of platform stands a long table covered by green cloth. A wrinkled old man is sitting at the left end of it, writing. Sitting to the extreme right is a gendarme. On the bare wall a great wooden Christ, twisted into a painful position, seems still to offer his eternal suffering for these brutes with the odors of beasts.

The Justice of the Peace finally enters. He is fat, high-colored, and his official gown flaps behind him as he hurries in. He sits down and looks at the audience with a look of supreme disdain.

He is one of these educated provincials, one of those who translate Horace, enjoy Voltaire's verse, and know *Vert-Vert* by heart, as well as the *risqué* poems of Parny.

He calls: "Well, Monsieur Potel, call the cases." Then he smiles and murmurs: "*Quidquid tentabam dicere versus erat.*"

The clerk of the court raises his bald head and mutters unintelligibly: "Madame Victoire Bascule *versus* Isidore Paturon."

An enormous countrywoman comes forward, one of the ladies of the county seat, with a beribboned hat, a watch chain stretched across her bosom, rings on her fingers, and earrings shining like lighted candles.

The justice of the peace bows to her with a look of recognition, in which there is a glint of jest, and he says: "Madame Bascule, please make clear your troubles."

The opposing party stands on the other side. It is represented by three persons. In the middle stands a young peasant of twenty-five, as plump as an apple and as red as a poppy. To his right is his wife, very young, thin, short, like a bantam chicken, with a narrow, flat head on which is fastened a pink bonnet. She has a round, surprised, and angry eye with which she glances sideways, after the fashion of poultry. To the left of the boy stands his father, a bent old man, whose twisted body disappears in his starched blouse as though it were under a bell.

Madame Bascule explains: "Your Honor, fifteen years ago I took this boy in. I have brought him up and loved him as a mother, I have done everything for him, I have made a man of him. He had promised, he had sworn not to leave me. He even signed an agreement, for which I gave him my little estate of Bec-de-Mortin, which is worth about six thousand. Now this little snip, this minx, this hussy——"

The Justice: Moderate your language, Madame Bascule.

Madame Bascule: This little . . . this little . . . well, I know what she is . . . turned his head, did I don't know what to him . . . and this big fool is going to marry her, and bring to her my property, my estate of Bec-de-Mortin. . . . Oh! no, no, indeed! . . . I have a paper, here it is . . . then let him give me back my property. We had a deed made out before the notary for the property, and a private paper for friendship. One is worth the other. Each one is secure that way, isn't he?

*(She holds out to the justice a large stamped paper.)*

Isidor Paturon: It isn't true.

The Justice: Keep still. You'll talk when your turn comes.

He reads: "I, the undersigned, Isidor Paturon, promise by this paper to my benefactress, Madame Bascule, never to leave her during my lifetime, and to serve her with devotion. Gorgeville, August 5, 1883."

The Justice: There is a cross as a signature. Can't you write?

Isidore: No.

The Justice: Did you make that cross?

Isidore: No.

The Justice: Well, then, who did it?

Isidore: She did it.

The Justice: Are you prepared to swear that you never made this cross?

Isidore *(earnestly):* I swear on the head of my father, of my mother, of my grandfather, of my grandmother, and of God who hears me, I swear it wasn't I. *(He raises his hand and spits to strengthen his oath.)*

The Justice *(laughing):* What were your relations with Madame Bascule, here present?

Isidore: She used me for her pleasure. *(Laughter in the audience.)*

The Justice: You mean to say that your relations were not as pure as she claims.

Father Paturon *(interrupting):* He wasn't fifteen, not fifteen, Your Honor, when she despatched him. . .

The Justice: You mean debauched, don't you?

The Father: I don't know. He wasn't fifteen. For four years she had been feeding him like a stuffed chicken, stuffing enough food into him to make him burst, saving your respect. And when the time had come when he seemed ready, she depraved him. . . .

The Justice: Depraved? And you allowed it?

The Father: It didn't make any difference whether it was she or another; it had to happen.

The Justice: Then of what are you complaining?

The Father: Nothing! I'm not complaining; only he's had enough, and he can't get away. I ask for protection from the law.

Madame Bascule: Your Honor, these people have been overwhelming you with lies. I made a man of him.

The Justice: I should say you had!

Madame Bascule: Now he wants to leave me; he wants to rob me. . . .

Isidore: It's not true, Judge. Five years ago I wanted to leave her because she got too fat, and I didn't like it. I told her I was going to leave her. Then she cries like a sponge, and said she'd give me Bec-de-Mortin to spend four or five more years with her. I said: "Yes, certainly!" Wouldn't you? I stayed five years, day fer day, hour fer hour. I was quits. Wasn't it worth it? *(Isidore's wife, who had been silent up to then, cries out in a piercing voice):*

"Look at her, look at her, Judge! Wasn't it worth it?"

The father nods his head in a convinced manner, and repeats: "It certainly was worth it."

Madame Bascule sinks onto the bench behind her, and begins to cry.

The Justice *(paternally):* My dear lady, I'm afraid that I can do nothing for you. You gave him your estate of Bec-de-Mortin in a perfectly regular manner. It certainly belongs to him. He had the unquestionable right to do whatever he wished with it, and to bring it to his wife as a dowry. It is not for me to enter into questions of . . . of . . . of delicacy. I must look at the thing from a legal point of view. I can do nothing.

Father Paturon *(proudly):* May I go home, Your Honor?

The Justice: Certainly.

*(They go away under the sympathetic looks of*

*the peasants, like people whose case is won. Madame Bascule sits sobbing on the bench.)*

The Justice *(smiling):* Calm yourself, dear lady, calm yourself. And if I have some advice to give you, it is to look for another—pupil.

Madame Bascule *(through her tears):* I can't find another.

The Justice: I am sorry that I am unable to recommend one to you.

*(She throws a despairing look toward the Christ on the cross, then she rises and leaves slowly, still weeping and hiding her face in her handkerchief.)*

The Justice *(turning toward the clerk of the court, and in a bantering voice):* Calypso could not be comforted after the departure of Ulysses. . . . *(In a serious voice):* Call the following cases.

The Clerk of the Court *(mumbling):* Célestin Polyte Lecacheur *versus* Prosper Magloire Dieulafait.

# A WIFE'S CONFESSION

MY friend, you have asked me to relate to you the most striking recollections of my life. I am very old, without relatives, without children; so I am free to make a confession to you. But promise me that you will never reveal my name.

I have had many admirers, as you know; I have often been in love. I was very beautiful; I may say this to-day, when my beauty is gone. Love was for me the life of the soul just as the air is the life of the body. I would have preferred to die rather than to exist without affection, without having some one who was always thinking of me. Women often say one can love but once with all the strength of one's heart. I have often been so desperately in love that I thought it would never end; but the feeling died out naturally like a fire lacking fuel.

I will tell you to-day the first of my adventures, in which I was very innocent, but which led to the

others. The horrible vengeance of that dreadful druggist of Pecq recalls to me the shocking drama of which I was, in spite of myself, a spectator.

I had been married a year to a rich man, Comte Hervé de Ker—a Breton of ancient family, whom I did not love, you understand. True love needs, it seems to me, freedom and impediments at the same time. The love which is imposed, sanctioned by law, and blessed by the priest—can we really call that love? A legal kiss is never as good as a stolen kiss. My husband was tall in stature, elegant, and a really fine gentleman in his manners. But he lacked intelligence. He spoke in a positive manner, and uttered trenchant opinions. He created the impression that his mind was full of ready-made views instilled into him by his father and mother, who had themselves got them from their ancestors. He never hesitated, but at once expressed his narrow-minded views without embarrassment and without realizing that there might be other ways of looking at things. One felt that his head was hermetically sealed, that no ideas circulated in it, none of those ideas which renew one's mind and make it healthy, like a breath of fresh air passing through a house with doors and windows open.

The country house we occupied was situated in the midst of a desolate tract of country. It was a large, melancholy structure, surrounded by enormous trees, with tufts of moss on them that recalled old men's white beards. The park, a real forest, was inclosed by a trench called a ha-ha; and at its extremity, near the moorland, we had big ponds full of reeds and floating grass. Between the two, at the edge of a stream which connected them, my husband built a little hut for shooting wild ducks.

We had, in addition to our ordinary staff of servants, a keeper, a sort of brute, devoted to my husband to the death, and a chambermaid, almost a friend, passionately attached to me. I had brought her back from Spain with me five years before. She was a foundling. She might have been taken for a gypsy with her dusky skin, her dark eyes, her hair, thick as a wood, and always waving around her forehead. She was then sixteen years old, but she looked twenty.

The autumn was beginning. We had a great many shooting parties, sometimes on neighboring estates, sometimes on our own; and I noticed a young man, the Baron de C——, whose visits at our home became singularly frequent. Then he ceased to come; I thought no more about it; but I perceived that my husband had changed in his demeanor toward me.

He seemed taciturn and preoccupied; he did not kiss me; and, in spite of the fact that he seldom came into my room, as I insisted on separate apartments in order that I might live my own life occasionally, I often heard a furtive step drawing near my door at night, and retiring again within a few minutes.

As my window was on the ground floor, I thought I had also often heard some one prowling in the shadow around the house. I told my husband about it, and, having looked at me intently for some seconds, he answered:

"It is nothing—it is the watchman."

* * * * * * *

Now, one evening, just after dinner, Hervé, who

appeared to be extraordinarily cheerful, with a saturnine sort of cheerfulness, said to me:

"Would you like to spend three hours out with the guns, in order to shoot a fox who comes every evening to eat my hens?"

I was surprised. I hesitated; but, as he kept staring at me with singular persistency, I ended by replying:

"Why, certainly, my friend." I must tell you that I could hunt the wolf and the wild boar as well as a man; so it was quite natural that he should suggest this shooting expedition to me.

But my husband, all of a sudden, had a curiously nervous look; and all the evening he kept rising up and sitting down feverishly.

About ten o'clock, he suddenly said to me: "Are you ready?"

I rose; and, as he was bringing me my gun himself, I asked:

"Are we to load with bullets or with deershot?"

He showed some astonishment; then he rejoined:

"Oh! only with deershot; that will be enough, you may be sure!"

Then, after some seconds, he added in a peculiar tone:

"You can boast of splendid presence of mind!"

I burst out laughing.

"I? Why, pray? Presence of mind because I am going to kill a fox? But what do you mean, my friend?"

And we quietly made our way across the park. All the household was asleep. The full moon seemed to give a yellow tint to the old gloomy building, whose slate roof shone brightly. The two turrets

that flanked it had two patches of light on their summits, and no noise disturbed the silence of this clear, sad night, sweet and still, which seemed in a death trance. Not a breath of air, not a shriek from a toad, not a hoot from an owl; a melancholy numbness lay heavy on everything. When we reached the trees in the park there was a chill in the air and an odor of fallen leaves. My husband said nothing; but he was listening, he was watching, he seemed to be scenting about in the shadows, possessed from head to foot by his passion for the chase.

We soon reached the edge of the ponds.

Their border of rushes remained motionless; not a breath of air stirred it; but at a certain point a little disturbance in the water would cause a circle to form, which gradually gave rise to other larger circles, spreading out indefinitely.

When we reached the hut where we were to lie in wait, my husband made me go in first; then he slowly loaded his gun, and the dry rattling of the hammer produced a strange effect on me. He saw that I was shuddering, and asked:

"Perhaps this trial is enough for you? If so, go back."

I was much surprised, and replied:

"Not at all. I did not come to go back without doing anything. How peculiar you are this evening!"

He murmured: "As you wish," and we remained there without moving.

At the end of about half an hour, as nothing broke the oppressive stillness of this bright autumn night, I said, in a low tone:

"Are you quite sure he passes this way?"

Hervé winced as if I had bitten him, and with

his mouth close to my ear, he said: "I am quite sure; do you understand?"

And once more there was silence.

I believe I was beginning to get drowsy when my husband pressed my arm, and, in a tone of voice changed to a hiss, he said:

"Do you see him over there under the trees?"

I looked in vain; I could distinguish nothing. And slowly Hervé now cocked his gun, all the time fixing his eyes on my face.

I was preparing to fire, when suddenly, thirty paces in front of us, appeared in the full light of the moon a man who was hurrying forward with rapid movements, his body bent, as if he were trying to escape.

I was so astounded that I uttered a loud cry; but, before I could turn round, there was a flash before my eyes; I heard a deafening report, and I saw the man rolling on the ground, like a wolf hit by a bullet.

I was terrified, almost going mad, and I uttered dreadful shrieks. Then a furious hand—it was Hervé's—seized me by the throat. I was flung down on the ground, then lifted off in his strong arms. He ran, carrying me, till we reached the body lying on the grass and he threw me on top of it violently, as if he wanted to break my head.

I felt it was all over with me; he was going to kill me, and he had just raised his heel to my forehead when, in his turn, he was gripped, knocked down before I could realize what had happened.

I sat up abruptly, and I saw kneeling on top of him Paquita, my maid, clinging to him with desperate energy like a wildcat, tearing his beard, his mustache, and the skin of his face.

Then, as if another idea had suddenly taken possession of her, she rose, and flinging herself on the corpse, she threw her arms around the dead man, kissing his eyes and his mouth, seeking his dead lips with her own, trying to find in them a breath and a long, long lover's kiss.

My husband, picking himself up, gazed at me. He understood, and falling at my feet, said:

"Oh! forgive me, my darling, I suspected you, and I killed this girl's lover. It was my watchman that deceived me."

But I was watching the strange kisses of that dead man and that living woman, her sobs and her writhings of despairing love——

And from that moment I understood that I should be unfaithful to my husband.

# EPIPHANY

"I SHOULD say I did remember that Epiphany supper during the war!" exclaimed Count de Garens, an army captain.

I was quartermaster of cavalry at the time, and for a fortnight had been scouting in front of the German advance guard. The evening before we had cut down a few Uhlans and had lost three men, one of whom was that poor little Raudeville. You remember Joseph de Raudeville, of course.

Well, on that day my commanding officer ordered me to take six troopers and to go and occupy the village of Porterin, where there had been five skirmishes in three weeks, and to hold it all night. There were not twenty houses left standing, not a dozen houses in that wasps' nest. So I took ten troopers and set out about four o'clock, and at five o'clock, while it was still pitch dark, we reached the first houses of Porterin. I halted and ordered Marchas,

you know Pierre de Marchas, who afterward married little Martel-Auvelin, the daughter of the Marquis de Martel-Auvelin, to go alone into the village, and to report to me what he saw.

I had selected nothing but volunteers, all men of good family. It is pleasant when on duty not to be forced to be on intimate terms with unpleasant fellows. This Marchas was as smart as possible, cunning as a fox and supple as a serpent. He could scent the Prussians as a dog can scent a hare, could discover food where we should have died of hunger without him, and obtained information from everybody, and information which was always reliable, with incredible cleverness.

In ten minutes he returned. "All right," he said; "there have been no Prussians here for three days. It is a sinister place, is this village. I have been talking to a Sister of Mercy, who is caring for four or five wounded men in an abandoned convent."

I ordered them to ride on, and we entered the principal street. On the right and left we could vaguely see roofless walls, which were hardly visible in the profound darkness. Here and there a light was burning in a room; some family had remained to keep its house standing as well as they were able; a family of brave or of poor people. The rain began to fall, a fine, icy cold rain, which froze as it fell on our cloaks. The horses stumbled against stones, against beams, against furniture. Marchas guided us, going before us on foot, and leading his horse by the bridle.

"Where are you taking us to?" I asked him. And he replied: "I have a place for us to lodge in, and a rare good one." And we presently stopped

before a small house, evidently belonging to some proprietor of the middle class. It stood on the street, was quite inclosed, and had a garden in the rear.

Marchas forced open the lock by means of a big stone which he picked up near the garden gate; then he mounted the steps, smashed in the front door with his feet and shoulders, lit a bit of wax candle, which he was never without, and went before us into the comfortable apartments of some rich private individual, guiding us with admirable assurance, as if he lived in this house which he now saw for the first time.

Two troopers remained outside to take care of our horses, and Marchas said to stout Ponderel, who followed him: "The stables must be on the left; I saw that as we came in; go and put the animals up there, for we do not need them;" and then, turning to me, he said: "Give your orders, confound it all!"

This fellow always astonished me, and I replied with a laugh: "I will post my sentinels at the country approaches and will return to you here." "How many men are you going to take?" "Five. The others will relieve them at five o'clock in the evening." "Very well. Leave me four to look after provisions, to do the cooking and to set the table. I will go and find out where the wine is hidden."

I went off, to reconnoiter the deserted streets until they ended in the open country, so as to post my sentries there.

Half an hour later I was back, and found Marchas lounging in a great easy-chair, the covering of which he had taken off, from love of luxury, as he said. He was warming his feet at the fire and

smoking an excellent cigar, whose perfume filled the room. He was alone, his elbows resting on the arms of the chair, his shoulders, his cheeks flushed, his eyes bright, and looking delighted.

I heard the noise of plates and dishes in the next room, and Marchas said to me, smiling in a contented manner: "This is famous; I found the champagne under the flight of steps outside, the brandy—fifty bottles of the very finest—in the kitchen garden under a pear tree which did not look to me to be quite straight, when I looked at it by the light of my lantern. As for solids, we have two fowls, a goose, a duck, and three pigeons. They are being cooked at this moment. It is a delightful part of the country."

I sat down opposite him, and the fire in the grate was burning my nose and cheeks. "Where did you find this wood?" I asked. "Splendid wood," he replied. "The owner's carriage. It is the paint which is causing all this flame, an essence of punch and varnish. A capital house!"

I laughed, for I saw the creature was funny, and he went on: "Fancy this being the Epiphany! I have had a bean put into the goose dressing, but there is no queen; it is really very annoying!" And I repeated like an echo: "It is annoying, but what do you want me to do in the matter?" "To find some, of course." "Some women. Women?—you must be mad." "I managed to find the brandy under the pear tree, and the champagne under the steps; and yet there was nothing to guide me, while as for you, a petticoat is a sure bait. Go and look, old fellow."

He looked so grave, so convinced, that I could not tell whether he was joking or not, and so I re-

plied: "Look here, Marchas, are you having a joke with me?" "I never joke on duty." "But where the devil do you expect me to find any women?" "Where you like; there must be two or three remaining in the neighborhood, so ferret them out and bring them here."

I got up, for it was too hot in front of the fire, and Marchas went on: "Do you want an idea?" "Yes." "Go and see the priest." "The priest? What for?" "Ask him to supper, and beg him to bring a woman with him." "The priest! A woman! Ha! ha! ha!"

But Marchas continued with extraordinary gravity: "I am not laughing; go and find the priest and tell him how we are situated, and, as he must be horribly dull, he will come. But tell him that we want one woman at least, a lady, of course, since we are all men of the world. He is sure to know his female parishioners on the tips of his fingers, and if there is one to suit us, and you manage it well, he will suggest her to you."

"Come, come, Marchas, what are you thinking of?" "My dear Garens, you can do this quite well. It will even be very funny. We are well bred, by Jove! and we will put on our most distinguished manners and our grandest style. Tell the abbé who we are, make him laugh, soften his heart, coax him and persuade him!" "No, it is impossible."

He drew his chair close to mine, and as he knew my special weakness, the scamp continued: "Just think what a swaggering thing it will be to do, and how amusing to tell about; the whole army will talk about it, and it will give you a famous reputation."

I hesitated, for the adventure rather tempted me, and he persisted: "Come, my little Garens. You

are the head of this detachment, and you alone can go and call on the head of the Church in this neighborhood. I beg of you to go, and I promise you that after the war I will relate the whole affair in verse in the *Revue de Deux Mondes*. You owe this much to your men, for you have made them march enough during the last month."

I got up at last and asked: "Where is the priest's house?" "Take the second turning at the end of the street, you will see an avenue, and at the end of the avenue you will find the church. The parsonage is beside it." As I went out, he called out: "Tell him the bill of fare, to make him hungry!"

I discovered the ecclesiastic's little house without any difficulty; it was by the side of a large, ugly brick church. I knocked at the door with my fist, as there was neither bell nor knocker, and a loud voice from inside asked: "Who is there?" To which I replied: "A quartermaster of hussars."

I heard the noise of bolts and of a key being turned, and found myself face to face with a tall priest with a large stomach, the chest of a prize-fighter, formidable hands projecting from turned-up sleeves, a red face, and the look of a kind man. I gave him a military salute and said: "Good day, Monsieur le Curé."

He had feared a surprise, some marauders' ambush, and he smiled as he replied: "Good day, my friend; come in." I followed him into a small room with a red tiled floor, in which a small fire was burning, very different to Marchas' furnace, and he gave me a chair and said: "What can I do for you?" "Monsieur, allow me first of all to introduce myself;" and I gave him my card, which

he took and read half aloud: "Le Comte de Garens."

I continued: "There are eleven of us here, Monsieur l'Abbé, five on picket duty, and six installed at the house of an unknown inhabitant. The names of the six are: Garens, myself; Pierre de Marchas, Ludovic de Ponderel, Baron d'Etreillis, Karl Massouligny, the painter's son, and Joseph Herbon, a young musician. I have come to ask you, in their name and my own, to do us the honor of supping with us. It is an Epiphany supper, Monsieur le Curé, and we should like to make it a little cheerful."

The priest smiled and murmured: "It seems to me to be hardly a suitable occasion for amusing one's self." And I replied: "We are fighting today, Monsieur. Fourteen of our comrades have been killed in a month, and three fell as late as yesterday. That is war. We stake our life every moment; have we not, therefore, the right to amuse ourselves freely? We are Frenchmen, we like to laugh, and we can laugh everywhere. Our fathers laughed on the scaffold! This evening we should like to cheer ourselves up a little, like gentlemen, and not like soldiers; you understand me, I hope. Are we wrong?"

He replied quickly: "You are quite right, my friend, and I accept your invitation with great pleasure." Then he called out: "Hermance!"

An old bent, wrinkled, horrible peasant woman appeared and said: "What do you want?" "I shall not dine at home, my daughter." "Where are you going to dine then?" "With some gentlemen, hussars."

I felt inclined to say: "Bring your servant with you," just to see Marchas' face, but I did not ven-

ture, and continued: "Do you know any one among your parishioners, male or female, whom I could invite as well?" He hesitated, reflected, and then said: "No, I do not know anybody!"

I persisted: "Nobody! Come, Monsieur, think; it would be very nice to have some ladies, I mean to say, some married couples! I know nothing about your parishoners. The baker and his wife, the grocer, the—the—the — watchmaker — the — shoemaker—the—the chemist with Mrs. Chemist. We have a good spread and plenty of wine, and we should be enchanted to leave pleasant recollections of ourselves with the people here."

The priest thought again for a long time, and then said resolutely: "No, there is nobody." I began to laugh. "By Jove, Monsieur le Curé, it is very annoying not to have an Epiphany queen, for we have the bean. Come, think. Is there not a married mayor, or a married deputy mayor, or a married municipal councilor or a schoolmaster?" "No, all the ladies have gone away." "What, is there not in the whole place some good tradesman's wife with her good tradesman, to whom we might give this pleasure, for it would be a pleasure to them, a great pleasure under present circumstances?"

But suddenly the *curé* began to laugh, and laughed so violently that he fairly shook, and presently exclaimed: "Ha! ha! ha! I have got what you want, yes. I have got what you want! Ha! ha! ha! We will laugh and enjoy ourselves, my children; we will have some fun. How pleased the ladies will be, I say, how delighted they will be! Ha! ha! . . . Where are you staying?"

I described the house, and he understood where

it was. "Very good," he said. "It belongs to Monsieur Bertin-Lavaille. I will be there in half an hour, with four ladies!!! . . . Ha! ha! ha! four ladies!!! . . ."

He went out with me, still laughing, and left me, repeating: "That is capital; in half an hour at Bertin-Lavaille's house."

I returned quickly, very much astonished and very much puzzled. "Covers for how many?" Marchas asked, as soon as he saw me. "Eleven. There are six of us hussars, besides the priest and four ladies." He was thunderstruck, and I was triumphant. He repeated: "Four ladies! Did you say, four ladies?" "I said four women." "Real women?" "Real women." "Well, accept my compliments!" "I will, for I deserve them."

He got out of his armchair, opened the door, and I saw a beautiful white tablecloth on a long table, round which three hussars in blue aprons were setting out the plates and glasses. "There are some women coming!" Marchas cried. And the three men began to dance and to cheer with all their might.

Everything was ready, and we were waiting. We waited for nearly an hour, while a delicious smell of roast poultry pervaded the whole house. At last, however, a knock against the shutters made us all jump up at the same moment. Stout Ponderel ran to open the door, and in less than a minute a little Sister of Mercy appeared in the doorway. She was thin, wrinkled and timid, and successively saluted the four bewildered hussars who saw her enter. Behind her, the noise of sticks sounded on the tiled floor in the vestibule, and as soon as she had come into the drawing-room, I saw three old heads in

white caps, following each other one by one, who came in, balancing themselves with different movements, one inclining to the right, while the other inclined to the left. And three worthy women showed themselves, limping, dragging their legs behind them, crippled by illness and deformed through old age, three infirm old women, past service, the only three pensioners who were able to walk in the establishment which Sister Saint-Benedict managed.

She had turned round to her invalids, full of anxiety for them, and then, seeing my quartermaster's stripes, she said to me: "I am much obliged to you for thinking of these poor women. They have very little pleasure in life, and you are at the same time giving them a great treat and doing them a great honor."

I saw the priest, who had remained in the obscurity of the passage, and who was laughing heartily, and I began to laugh in my turn, especially when I saw Marchas' face. Then, motioning the nun to the seats, I said: "Sit down, sister; we are very proud and very happy that you have accepted our unpretentious invitation."

She took three chairs which stood against the wall, set them before the fire, led her three old women to them, settled them on them, took their sticks and shawls, which she put into a corner, and then, pointing to the first, a thin woman with an enormous stomach, who was evidently suffering from the dropsy, she said: "This is Mother Paumelle, whose husband was killed by falling from a roof, and whose son died in Africa; she is sixty years old." Then she pointed to another, a tall woman, whose head trembled unceasingly: "This is Mother Jean-Jean, who is sixty-seven. She is

nearly blind, for her face was terribly singed in a fire, and her right leg was half burned off."

Then she pointed to the third, a sort of dwarf, with protruding, round, stupid eyes, which she rolled incessantly in all directions. "This is La Putois, an idiot. She is only forty-four."

I bowed to the three women as if I were being presented to some royal highnesses, and turning to the priest, I said. "You are an excellent man, Monsieur l'Abbé, to whom all of us here owe a debt of gratitude."

Everybody was laughing, in fact, except Marchas, who seemed furious, and just then Karl Massouligny cried: "Sister Saint-Benedict, supper is on the table!"

I made her go first with the priest, then I helped up Mother Paumelle, whose arm I took and dragged her into the next room, which was no easy task, for she seemed heavier than a lump of iron.

Stout Ponderel gave his arm to Mother Jean-Jean, who bemoaned her crutch, and little Joseph Herbon took the idiot, La Putois, to the dining-room, which was filled with the odor of the viands.

As soon as we were opposite our plates, the sister clapped her hands three times, and, with the precision of soldiers presenting arms, the women made a rapid sign of the cross, and then the priest slowly repeated the *Benedictus* in Latin. Then we sat down, and the two fowls appeared, brought in by Marchas, who chose to wait at table rather than to sit down as a guest to this ridiculous repast.

But I cried: "Bring the champagne at once!" and a cork flew out with the noise of a pistol, and in spite of the resistance of the priest and of the kind sister, the three hussars, sitting by the side of

the three invalids, emptied their three full glasses down their throats by force.

Massouligny, who possessed the faculty of making himself at home, and of being on good terms with every one, wherever he was, made love to Mother Paumelle in the drollest manner. The dropsical woman, who had retained her cheerfulness in spite of her misfortunes, answered him banteringly in a high falsetto voice which appeared as if it were put on, and she laughed so heartily at her neighbor's jokes that it was quite alarming. Little Herbon had seriously undertaken the task of making the idiot drunk, and Baron d'Etreillis, whose wits were not always particularly sharp, was questioning old Jean-Jean about the life, the habits, and the rules in the hospital.

The nun said to Massouligny in consternation: "Oh! oh! you will make her ill; pray do not make her laugh like that, Monsieur. Oh! Monsieur——" Then she got up and rushed at Herbon to take a full glass out of his hands which he was hastily emptying down la Putois' throat, while the priest shook with laughter, and said to the sister: "Never mind; just this once, it will not hurt her. Do leave them alone."

After the two fowls they ate the duck, which was flanked by the three pigeons and the blackbird, and then the goose appeared, smoking, golden-brown, and diffusing a warm odor of hot, browned roast meat. La Paumelle, who was getting lively, clapped her hands; la Jean-Jean left off answering the baron's numerous questions, and La Putois uttered grunts of pleasure, half cries and half sighs, as little children do when one shows them candy. "Allow me to take charge of this animal," the *curé* said.

"I understand these sort of operations better than most people." "Certainly, Monsieur l'Abbé," and the sister said: "How would it be to open the window a little? They are too warm, and I am afraid they will be ill."

I turned to Marchas: "Open the window for a minute." He did so; the cold outer air as it came in made the candles flare, and the steam from the goose, which the *curé* was scientifically carving, with a table napkin round his neck, whirl about. We watched him doing it, without speaking now, for we were interested in his attractive handiwork, and seized with renewed appetite at the sight of that enormous golden-brown bird, whose limbs fell one after another into the brown gravy at the bottom of the dish. At that moment, in the midst of that greedy silence which kept us all attentive, the distant report of a shot came in at the open window.

I started to my feet so quickly that my chair fell down behind me, and I shouted: "To saddle, all of you! You, Marchas, take two men and go and see what it is. I shall expect you back here in five minutes." And while the three riders went off at full gallop through the night, I got into the saddle with my three remaining hussars, in front of the steps of the villa, while the *curé,* the sister and the three old women showed their frightened faces at the window.

We heard nothing more, except the barking of a dog in the distance. The rain had ceased, and it was cold, very cold, and soon I heard the gallop of a horse, of a single horse, coming back. It was Marchas, and I called out to him: "Well?" "It is nothing; François has wounded an old peasant who refused to answer his challenge: 'Who goes

there? ' and who continued to advance in spite of the order to keep off; but they are bringing him here, and we shall see what is the matter."

I gave order for the horses to put back in the stable, and I sent my two soldiers to meet the others, and returned to the house. Then the *curé,* Marchas, and I took a mattress into the room to lay the wounded man on; the sister tore up a table napkin in order to make lint, while the three frightened women remained huddled up in a corner.

Soon I heard the rattle of sabers on the road, and I took a candle to show a light to the men who were returning; and they soon appeared, carrying that inert, soft, long, sinister object which a human body becomes when life no longer sustains it.

They put the wounded man on the mattress that had been prepared for him, and I saw at the first glance that he was dying. He had the death-rattle and was spitting up blood, which ran out of the corners of his mouth, forced out of his mouth by his gasps. The man was covered with blood! His cheeks, his beard, his hair, his neck and his clothes seemed to have been soaked, to have been dipped in a red tub; and that blood stuck to him, and had become a dull color which was horrible to look at.

The wounded man, wrapped up in a large shepherd's cloak, occasionally opened his dull, vacant eyes, which seemed stupid with astonishment, like those of animals wounded by a sportsman, which fall at his feet, more than half dead already, stupefied with fear and astonishment.

The *curé* exclaimed: " Ah, there is old Placide, the shepherd from les Marlins. He is deaf, poor man, and heard nothing. Ah! Oh, God! they have killed the unhappy man! " The sister had opened

his blouse and shirt, and was looking at a little blue hole in the middle of his chest, which was not bleeding any more. "There is nothing to be done," she said.

The shepherd was gasping terribly and bringing up blood with every last breath, and in his throat, to the very depth of his lungs, they could hear an ominous and continued gurgling. The *curé,* standing in front of him, raised his right hand, made the sign of the cross, and in a slow and solemn voice pronounced the Latin words which purify men's souls, but before they were finished, the old man was shaken by a rapid shock, as if something had given way inside him; he no longer breathed. He was dead.

When I turned round, I saw a sight which was even more horrible than the death struggle of this unfortunate man; the three old women were standing up huddled close together, hideous, and grimacing with fear and horror. I went up to them, and they began to utter shrill screams, while La Jean-Jean, whose burned leg could no longer support her, fell to the ground at full length.

Sister Saint-Benedict left the dead man, ran up to her infirm old women, and without a word or a look for me, wrapped their shawls round them, gave them their crutches, pushed them to the door, made them go out, and disappeared with them into the dark night.

I saw that I could not even let a hussar accompany them, for the mere rattle of a sword would have sent them mad with fear.

The *curé* was still looking at the dead man; but at last he turned round to me and said:

"Oh! What a horrible thing!"

# A FAMILY

I WAS to see my old friend, Simon Radevin, of whom I had lost sight for fifteen years. At one time he was my most intimate friend, the friend who knows one's thoughts, with whom one passes long, quiet, happy evenings, to whom one tells one's secret love affairs, and who seems to draw out those rare, ingenious, delicate thoughts born of that sympathy that gives sense of repose.

For years we had scarcely been separated; we had lived, traveled, thought and dreamed together; had liked the same things, had admired the same books, understood the same authors, trembled with the same sensations, and very often laughed at the same individuals, whom we understood completely by merely exchanging a glance.

Then he married. He married quite suddenly a little girl from the provinces, who had come to

Paris in search of a husband. How in the world could that little thin, insipidly fair girl, with her weak hands, her light, vacant eyes, and her clear, silly voice, who was exactly like a hundred thousand marriageable dolls, have picked up that intelligent, clever young fellow? Can any one understand these things? No doubt he had hoped for happiness, simple, quiet and long-enduring happiness, in the arms of a good, tender and faithful woman; he had seen all that in the transparent looks of that schoolgirl with light hair.

He had not dreamed of the fact that an active, living and vibrating man grows weary of everything as soon as he understands the stupid reality, unless, indeed, he becomes so brutalized that he understands nothing whatever.

What would he be like when I met him again? Still lively, witty, light-hearted and enthusiastic, or in a state of mental torpor induced by provincial life? A man may change greatly in the course of fifteen years!

The train stopped at a small station, and as I got out of the carriage, a stout, a very stout, man with red cheeks and a big stomach rushed up to me with open arms, exclaiming: "George!" I embraced him, but I had not recognized him, and then I said, in astonishment: "By Jove! You have not grown thin!" And he replied with a laugh: "What did you expect? Good living, a good table and good nights! Eating and sleeping, that is my existence!"

I looked at him closely, trying to discover in that broad face the features I held so dear. His eyes alone had not changed, but I no longer saw the same expression in them, and I said to myself: "If the

expression be the reflection of the mind, the thoughts in that head are not what they used to be formerly; those thoughts which I knew so well."

Yet his eyes were bright, full of happiness and friendship, but they had not that clear, intelligent expression which shows as much as words the brightness of the intellect. Suddenly he said: "Here are my two eldest children." A girl of fourteen, who was almost a woman, and a boy of thirteen, in the dress of a boy from a *lycée,* came forward in a hesitating and awkward manner, and I said in a low voice: "Are they yours?" "Of course they are," he laughed. "How many have you?" "Five! There are three more at home."

He said this in a proud, self-satisfied, almost triumphant manner, and I felt profound pity, mingled with a feeling of vague contempt, for this vainglorious and simple reproducer of his species.

I got into a carriage which he drove himself, and we set off through the town, a dull, sleepy, gloomy town where nothing was moving in the streets except a few dogs and two or three maidservants. Here and there a shopkeeper, standing at his door, took off his hat, and Simon returned his salute and told me the man's name; no doubt to show me that he knew all the inhabitants personally, and the thought struck me that he was thinking of becoming a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies, that dream of all those who bury themselves in the provinces.

We were soon out of the town, and the carriage turned into a garden that was an imitation of a park, and stopped in front of a turreted house, which tried to look like a château.

"That is my den," said Simon, so that I might compliment him on it. "It is charming," I replied.

A lady appeared on the steps, dressed for company, and with company phrases all ready prepared. She was no longer the light-haired, insipid girl I had seen in church fifteen years previously, but a stout lady in curls and flounces, one of those ladies of uncertain age, without intellect, without any of those things that go to make a woman. In short, she was a mother, a stout, commonplace mother, a human breeding machine which procreates without any other preoccupation but her children and cook book.

She welcomed me, and I went into the hall, where three children ranged according to their height, seemed set out for review, like firemen before a mayor, and I said: "Ah! ah! so there are the others?" Simon, radiant with pleasure, introduced them: "Jean, Sophie, and Gontran."

The door of the drawing-room was open. I went in, and in the depths of an easy-chair I saw something trembling, a man, an old, paralyzed man. Madame Radevin came forward and said: "This is my grandfather, Monsieur; he is eighty-seven." And then she shouted into the shaking old man's ears: "This is a friend of Simon's, papa." The old gentleman tried to say "good day" to me, and he muttered: "Oua, oua, oua," and waved his hand, and I took a seat saying: "You are very kind, Monsieur."

Simon had just come in, and he said with a laugh: "So! You have made grandpapa's acquaintance. He is a treasure, that old man; he is the delight of the children. But he is so greedy that he almost kills himself at every meal; you have no idea what he would eat if he were allowed to do as he pleased. But you will see, you will see. He

looks at all the sweets as if they were so many girls. You never saw anything so funny; you will see presently."

I was then shown to my room to change my dress for dinner, and hearing a great clatter behind me on the stairs, I turned round and saw that all the children were following me behind their father; to do me honor, no doubt.

My windows looked out across a dreary, interminable plain, an ocean of grass, of wheat and of oats, without a clump of trees or any rising ground, a striking and melancholy picture of the life which they must be leading in that house.

A bell rang! it was for dinner, and I went downstairs. Madame Radevin took my arm in a ceremonious manner, and we passed into the dining-room. A footman wheeled in the old man in his armchair. He gave a greedy and curious look at the dessert, as he turned his shaking head with difficulty from one dish to the other.

Simon rubbed his hands: "You will be amused," he said; and all the children, understanding that I was going to be indulged with the sight of their greedy grandfather, began to laugh, while their mother merely smiled and shrugged her shoulders, and Simon, making a speaking trumpet of his hands, shouted at the old man: "This evening there is sweet creamed rice!" The wrinkled face of the grandfather brightened, and he trembled more violently, from head to foot, showing that he had understood and was very pleased. The dinner began.

"Just look!" Simon whispered. The old man did not like the soup, and refused to eat it; but he was obliged to do it for the good of his health, and the footman forced the spoon into his mouth, while

the old man blew so energetically, so as not to swallow the soup, that it was scattered like a spray all over the table and over his neighbors. The children writhed with laughter at the spectacle, while their father, who was also amused, said: "Is not the old man comical?"

During the whole meal they were taken up solely with him. He devoured the dishes on the table with his eyes, and tried to seize them and pull them over to him with his trembling hands. They put them almost within his reach, to see his useless efforts, his trembling clutches at them, the piteous appeal of his whole nature, of his eyes, of his mouth and of his nose as he smelt them, and he slobbered on his table napkin with eagerness, while uttering inarticulate grunts. And the whole family was highly amused at this horrible and grotesque scene.

Then they put a tiny morsel on his plate, and he ate with feverish gluttony, in order to get something more as soon as possible, and when the sweetened rice was brought in, he nearly had a fit, and groaned with greediness, and Gontran called out to him: "You have eaten too much already; you can have no more." And they pretended not to give him any. Then he began to cry; he cried and trembled more violently than ever, while all the children laughed. At last, however, they gave him his helping, a very small piece; and as he ate the first mouthful, he made a comical noise in his throat, and a movement with his neck as ducks do when they swallow too large a morsel, and when he had swallowed it, he began to stamp his feet, so as to get more.

I was seized with pity for this saddening and ridiculous Tantalus, and interposed on his behalf:

"Come, give him a little more rice." But Simon replied: "Oh! no, my dear fellow, if he were to eat too much, it might harm him, at his age."

I held my tongue, and thought over those words. Oh, ethics! Oh, logic! Oh, wisdom! At his age! So they deprived him of his only remaining pleasure out of regard for his health! His health! What would he do with it, inert and trembling wreck that he was? They were taking care of his life, so they said. His life? How many days? Ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred? Why? For his own sake? Or to preserve for some time longer the spectacle of his impotent greediness in the family.

There was nothing left for him to do in this life, nothing whatever. He had one single wish left, one sole pleasure; why not grant him that last solace until he died?

After we had played cards for a long time, I went up to my room and to bed; I was low-spirited and sad, sad, sad! and I sat at my window. Not a sound could be heard outside but the beautiful warbling of a bird in a tree, somewhere in the distance. No doubt the bird was singing in a low voice during the night, to lull his mate, who was asleep on her eggs.

And I thought of my poor friend's five children, and pictured him to myself, snoring by the side of his ugly wife.

# LETTER FOUND ON A DROWNED MAN

MADAME, you ask me whether I am laughing at you? You cannot believe that a man has never been in love. Well, then, no, no, I have never loved, never!

Why is this? I really cannot tell. I have never experienced that intoxication of the heart which we call love! Never have I lived in that dream, in that exaltation, in that state of madness into which the image of a woman casts us. I have never been pursued, haunted, roused to fever heat, lifted up to Paradise by the thought of meeting, or by the possession of, a being who had suddenly become for me more desirable than any good fortune, more beautiful than any other creature, of more consequence than the whole world! I have never wept, I have never suffered, on account of any of you. I have not passed my nights sleepless, while thinking of her. I have no experience of waking up with the waking thoughts bright with thought and memories of her. I have never known the wild rapture of hope before her arrival, or the divine sadness of regret when she went from me, leaving behind her a delicate odor of violet powder.

I have never been in love.

I have also often asked myself why this is. And truly I can scarcely tell. Nevertheless, I have found some reasons for it; but they are of a metaphysical character, and perhaps you will not be able to appreciate them.

I suppose I am too critical of women to submit to their fascination. I ask you to forgive me for this remark. I will explain what I mean. In every creature there is a moral being and a physical being. In order to love, it would be necessary for me to find a harmony between these two beings which I have never found. One always predominates; sometimes the moral, sometimes the physical.

The intellect which we have a right to require in a woman, in order to love her, is not the same as the virile intellect. It is more and it is less. A woman must have a mind open, delicate, sensitive, refined, impressionable. She has no need of either power or initiative in thought, but she must have kindness, elegance, tenderness, coquetry, and that faculty of assimilation which, in a little while, raises her to an equality with him who shares her life. Her greatest quality must be tact, that subtle sense which is to the mind what touch is to the body. It reveals to her a thousand little things, contours, angles and forms, on the plane of the intellectual.

Very frequently, pretty women have not intellect to correspond with their personal charms. Now, the slightest lack of harmony strikes me and pains me at the first glance. In friendship, this is not of importance. Friendship is a compact in which one fairly shares defects and merits. We may judge of friends, whether man or woman, giving them credit for what is good and overlooking what is bad in

them, and appreciating them at their just value, while giving ourselves up to an intimate, intense and charming sympathy.

In order to love, one must be blind, surrender one's self absolutely, see nothing, reason nothing, understand nothing. One must adore the weakness as well as the beauty of the beloved object, renounce all judgment, all reflection, all perspicacity.

I am incapable of such blindness, and rebel at unreasoning subjugation. This is not all. I have such a high and subtle idea of harmony that nothing can ever fulfil my ideal. But you will call me a madman. Listen to me. A woman, in my opinion, may have an exquisite soul and charming body without that body and that soul being in perfect harmony with one another. I mean that persons who have noses made in a certain shape are not to be expected to think in a certain fashion. The fat have no right to make use of the same words and phrases as the thin. You, who have blue eyes, Madame, cannot look at life and judge of things and events as if you had black eyes. The shade of your eyes should correspond, by a sort of fatality, with the shade of your thought. In perceiving these things I have the scent of a bloodhound. Laugh if you like, but it is so.

And yet once I imagined that I was in love for an hour, for a day. I had foolishly yielded to the influence of surrounding circumstances. I allowed myself to be beguiled by the mirage of an aurora. Would you like me to tell you this short story?

* * * * * * *

I met, one evening, a pretty, enthusiastic little woman who took a poetic fancy to spend a night

with me in a boat on a river. I would have preferred a room and a bed; however, I consented to the river and the boat.

It was in the month of June. My fair companion chose a moonlight night in order the better to stimulate her imagination.

We had dined at a riverside inn, and set out in the boat about ten o'clock. I thought it a rather foolish kind of adventure; but as my companion pleased me I did not worry about it. I sat down on the seat facing her; I seized the oars, and off we started.

I could not deny that the scene was picturesque. We glided past a wooded isle full of nightingales, and the current carried us rapidly over the river covered with silvery ripples. The tree-toads uttered their shrill, monotonous cry; the frogs croaked in the grass by the river's bank, and the lapping of the water as it flowed on made around us a kind of confused murmur almost imperceptible, disquieting, and gave us a vague sensation of mysterious fear.

The sweet charm of warm nights and of streams glittering in the moonlight penetrated us. It was delightful to be alive, and to float along thus, and to dream and to feel at one's side a sympathetic and beautiful young woman.

I was somewhat affected, somewhat agitated, somewhat intoxicated by the pale brightness of the night and the consciousness of my proximity to a lovely woman.

"Come and sit beside me," she said.

I obeyed.

She went on.

"Recite some poetry for me."

This appeared to be rather too much. I declined;

she persisted. She certainly wanted to play the game, to have a whole orchestra of sentiment, from the moon to the rhymes of poets. In the end, I had to yield, and, as if in mockery, I repeated to her a charming little poem by Louis Bouilhet, of which the following are the last verses:

"I hate the poet who with tearful eye
Murmurs some name while gazing tow'rds a star,
Who sees no magic in the earth or sky,
Unless Lizette or Ninon be not far.

"The bard who in all Nature nothing sees
Divine, unless a petticoat he ties
Amorously to the branches of the trees
Or nightcap to the grass, is scarcely wise.

"He has not heard the eternal's thunder tone,
The voice of Nature in her various moods,
Who cannot tread the dim ravines alone,
And of no woman dream 'mid whispering woods."

I expected some reproaches. Nothing of the sort. She murmured:

"How true it is!"

I was astonished. Had she understood?

Our boat had gradually approached the bank, and became entangled in the branches of a willow which impeded its progress. I drew my arm around my companion's waist, and very gently moved my lips toward her neck. But she repulsed me with an abrupt, angry movement.

"Have done, pray! You are rude!"

I tried to draw her toward me. She resisted, caught hold of the tree, and was near flinging us both into the water. I deemed it the prudent course to cease my importunities.

She said:

" I would rather capsize you. I feel so happy. I want to dream. This is so delightful." Then, in a slightly malicious tone, she added:

" Have you already forgotten the verses you repeated to me just now? "

She was right. I became silent.

She went on:

" Come, now! "

And I plied the oars once more.

I began to think the night long and my position ridiculous.

My companion said to me:

" Will you make me a promise? "

" Yes. What is it? "

" To remain quiet, well-behaved, and discreet, if I permit you——"

" What? Say what you mean! "

" Here is what I mean! I want to lie down on my back at the bottom of the boat with you by my side. But I forbid you to touch me, to embrace me —in short to—to caress me."

I promised. She said warningly:

" If you move, I'll capsize the boat."

And then we lay down side by side, our eyes turned toward the sky, while the boat glided slowly through the water. We were rocked by its gentle motion. The slight sounds of the night came to us more distinctly in the bottom of the boat, sometimes causing us to start. And I felt springing up within me a strange, poignant emotion, an infinite tenderness, something like an irresistible impulse to open my arms in order to embrace, to open my heart in order to love, to give myself, to give my thoughts, my body, my life, my entire being to some one.

My companion murmured, like one in a dream: "Where are we? Where are we going? It seems to me that I am leaving the earth. How sweet it is! Ah, if you loved me—a little! ! ! "

My heart began to throb. I had no answer to give. It seemed to me that I loved her. I had no longer any violent desire. I felt happy there by her side, and that was enough for me.

And thus we remained for a long, long time without stirring. We had clasped each other's hands; some delightful force rendered us motionless, an unknown force stronger than ourselves, an alliance, chaste, intimate, absolute, of our beings lying there side by side, belonging to each other without contact. What was this! How do I know? Love, perhaps?

Little by little, the dawn appeared. It was three o'clock in the morning. A great brightness spread over the sky. The boat knocked against something. I rose up. We had come close to a tiny islet.

But I remained enchanted, in an ecstasy. Before us stretched the firmament, red, pink, violet, spotted with fiery clouds resembling golden vapor. The river was glowing with purple, and three houses on one side of it seemed to be burning.

I bent toward my companion. I was going to say, "Oh! look!" But I held my tongue, quite dazed, and I could no longer see anything except her. She, too, was rosy, with rosy flesh tints with which she must have been partly a reflection of the hue of the sky. Her tresses were rosy; her eyes were rosy; her teeth were rosy; her dress, her laces, her smile, all were rosy. And in truth I believed, so overpowering was the illusion, that the aurora was there before me.

She rose softly to her feet, holding out her lips to me; and I moved toward her, trembling, delirious, feeling indeed that I was going to kiss Heaven, to kiss happiness, to kiss a dream that had become a woman, to kiss the ideal which had descended into human flesh.

She said to me: "You have a caterpillar in your hair." And suddenly I felt as sad as if I had lost all hope in life.

That is all, Madame. It is puerile, silly, stupid. But I am sure that since that day it would be impossible for me to love. And yet—who can tell?

[The young man upon whom this letter was found was yesterday taken out of the Seine between Bougival and Marly. An obliging bargeman, who had searched the pockets in order to ascertain the name of the deceased, brought this paper to the author.]

# THE RABBIT

LD LECACHEUR appeared at the door of his house between five and a quarter past five in the morning, his usual hour, to watch his men going to work.

He was only half awake, his face was red, and with his right eye open and the left nearly closed, he was buttoning his braces over his fat stomach with some difficulty, while at the same time looking into every corner of the farmyard with a searching glance. The sun darted its oblique rays through the beech trees by the side of the ditch and athwart the apple trees outside, and was making the cocks crow on the dunghill and the pigeons coo on the roof. The smell of the cow-stable came through the open door, and blended in the fresh morning air with the

pungent odor of the barn, where the horses were neighing, with their heads turned toward the light.

As soon as his trousers were properly fastened, Lecacheur came out, and went first of all toward the hen-house to count the morning's eggs, for he had been afraid of thefts for some time; but the servant girl ran up to him with lifted arms and cried:

"Master! Master! they have stolen a rabbit during the night."

"A rabbit?"

"Yes, master, the big gray rabbit, from the hutch on the left;" whereupon the farmer completely opened his left eye, and said, simply:

"I must see about that."

And off he went to inspect it. The hutch had been broken open and the rabbit was gone. Then he became thoughtful, closed his right eye again, and scratched his nose, and after a little consideration, he said to the frightened girl, who was standing stupidly before her master:

"Go and fetch the gendarmes; say I expect them as soon as possible."

Lecacheur was Mayor of the village, Piargry-le-Gras, and ruled it like a master, on account of his money and position; and as soon as the servant had disappeared in the direction of the village, which was only about five hundred yards off, he went into the house to have his morning coffee and to discuss the matter with his wife, whom he found on her knees in front of the fire, trying to make it burn quickly, and as soon as he got to the door, he said:

"Somebody has stolen the gray rabbit."

She turned round so suddenly that she found herself sitting on the floor, and looking at her husband with distressed eyes, she said:

"What is it, Cacheux? Somebody has stolen a rabbit?"

"The big gray one."

She sighed.

"How sad! Who can have done it?"

She was a little, thin, active, neat woman, who knew all about farming. Lecacheur had his own ideas about the matter.

"It must be that fellow Polyte."

His wife got up suddenly and said in a furious voice:

"He did it! he did it! You need not look for any one else. He did it! You have said it, Cacheux!"

All her peasant's fury, all her avarice, all her rage of a saving woman against the man of whom she had always been suspicious, and against the girl whom she had always suspected, showed themselves in the contraction of her mouth, and the wrinkles in the cheeks and forehead of her thin, exasperated face.

"And what have you done?" she asked.

"I have sent for the gendarmes."

This Polyte was a laborer, who had been employed on the farm for a few days, and who had been dismissed by Lecacheur for an insolent answer. He was an old soldier, and was supposed to have retained his habits of marauding and debauchery, from his campaigns in Africa. He did anything for a livelihood, but whether he were a mason, a navvy, a reaper, whether he broke stones or lopped trees, he was always lazy, and so he remained nowhere for long, and had, at times, to change his neighborhood to obtain work.

From the first day that he came to the farm,

Lecacheur's wife had detested him, and now she was sure that he had committed the robbery.

In about half an hour the two gendarmes arrived. Brigadier Sénateur was very tall and thin, and Gendarme Lenient short and fat. Lecacheur made them sit down, and told them the affair, and then they went and saw the scene of the theft, in order to verify the fact that the hutch had been broken open, and to collect all the proofs they could. When they got back to the kitchen, the mistress brought in some wine, filled their glasses, and asked with a distrustful look:

"Shall you catch him?"

The brigadier, who had his sword between his legs, appeared thoughtful. Certainly, he was sure of taking him, if he was pointed out to him, but if not, he could not answer for being able to discover him, himself, and after reflecting for a long time, he put this simple question:

"Do you know the thief?"

And Lecacheur replied, with a look of Normandy slyness in his eyes:

"As for knowing him, I do not, as I did not see him commit the robbery. If I had seen him, I should have made him eat it raw, skin and flesh, without a drop of cider to wash it down. But as for saying who it is, I cannot, although I believe it is that good-for-nothing Polyte."

Then he related at length his troubles with Polyte, his leaving his service, his bad reputation, things which had been told him, accumulating insignificant and minute proofs, and then, the brigadier, who had been listening very attentively while he emptied his glass and filled it again with an indifferent air, turned to his gendarme and said:

"We must go and look in the cottage of Severin's wife." At which the gendarme smiled and nodded three times.

Then Madame Lecacheur came to them, and very quietly, with all a peasant's cunning, questioned the brigadier in her turn. That shepherd Severin, a simpleton, a sort of brute who had been brought up and grown up among his bleating flocks, and who knew scarcely anything besides them in the world, had nevertheless preserved the peasant's instinct for saving, at the bottom of his heart. For years and years he must have hidden in hollow trees and crevices in the rocks all that he earned, either as shepherd or by curing animals' sprains—for the bone-setter's secret had been handed down to him by the old shepherd whose place he took—by touch or word, and one day he bought a small property, consisting of a cottage and a field, for three thousand francs.

A few months later it became known that he was going to marry a servant, notorious for her bad morals, the innkeeper's servant. The young fellows said that the girl, knowing that he was pretty well off, had been to his cottage every night, and had taken him, captured him, led him on to matrimony, little by little, night by night.

And then, having been to the Mayor's office and to church, she now lived in the house which her man had bought, while he continued to tend his flocks, day and night, on the plains.

And the brigadier added:

"Polyte has been sleeping there for three weeks, for the thief has no place of his own to go to!"

The gendarme make a little joke:

"He takes the shepherd's blankets."

Madame Lecacheur, who was seized by a fresh access of rage, of rage increased by a married woman's anger against debauchery, exclaimed:

"It is she, I am sure. Go there. Ah, the blackguard thieves!"

But the brigadier was quite unmoved.

"One minute," he said. "Let us wait until twelve o'clock, as he goes and dines there every day. I shall catch them with it under their noses."

The gendarme smiled, pleased at his chief's idea, and Lecacheur also smiled now, for the affair of the shepherd struck him as very funny; deceived husbands are always a joke.

* * * * * * *

Twelve o'clock had just struck when the brigadier, followed by his man, knocked gently three times at the door of a little lonely house, situated at the corner of a wood, five hundred yards from the village.

They had been standing close against the wall, so as not to be seen from within, and they waited. As nobody answered, the brigadier knocked again in a minute or two. It was so quiet that the house seemed uninhabited; but Lenient, the gendarme, who had very quick ears, said that he heard somebody moving about inside, and then Sénateur got angry. He would not allow any one to resist the authority of the law for a moment, and, knocking at the door with the hilt of his sword, he cried out:

"Open the door, in the name of the law."

As this order had no effect, he roared out:

"If you do not obey, I shall smash the lock. I am the brigadier of the gendarmerie, by G——! Here, Lenient."

He had not finished speaking when the door opened and Sénateur saw before him a fat girl, with a very red, blowzy face, with drooping breasts, a big stomach and broad hips, a sort of animal, the wife of the shepherd Severin, and he went into the cottage.

"I have come to pay you a visit, as I want to make a little search," he said, and he looked about him. On the table there was a plate, a jug of cider and a glass half full, which proved that a meal had been going on. Two knives were lying side by side, and the shrewd gendarme winked at his superior officer.

"It smells good," the latter said.

"One might swear that it was stewed rabbit," Lenient added, much amused.

"Will you have a glass of brandy?" the peasant woman asked.

"No, thank you; I only want the skin of the rabbit that you are eating."

She pretended not to understand, but she was trembling.

"What rabbit?"

The brigadier had taken a seat, and was calmly wiping his forehead.

"Come, come, you are not going to try and make us believe that you live on couch grass. What were you eating there all by yourself for your dinner?"

"I? Nothing whatever, I swear to you. A mite of butter on my bread."

"You are a novice, my good woman. *A mite of butter on your bread.* . . . You are mistaken; you ought to have said: a mite of butter on the rabbit. By G——, your butter smells good! It is spe-

cial butter, extra good butter, butter fit for a wedding; certainly, not household butter!"

The gendarme was shaking with laughter, and repeated:

"Not household butter, certainly."

As Brigadier Sénateur was a joker, all the gendarmes had grown facetious, and the officer continued:

"Where is your butter?"

"My butter?"

"Yes, your butter."

"In the jar."

"Then where is the butter-jar?"

"Here it is."

She brought out an old cup, at the bottom of which there was a layer of rancid salt butter, and the brigadier smelled it, and said, with a shake of his head:

"It is not the same. I want the butter that smells of the rabbit. Come, Lenient, open your eyes; look under the sideboard, my good fellow, and I will look under the bed."

Having shut the door, he went up to the bed and tried to move it; but it was fixed to the wall, and had not been moved for more than half a century, apparently. Then the brigadier stooped, and made his uniform crack. A button had flown off.

"Lenient," he said.

"Yes, brigadier?"

"Come here, my lad, and look under the bed; I am too tall. I will look after the sideboard."

He got up and waited while his man executed his orders.

Lenient, who was short and stout, took off his kepi, laid himself on his stomach, and, putting his

face on the floor, looked at the black cavity under the bed, and then, suddenly, he exclaimed:

"All right, here we are!"

"What have you got? The rabbit?

"No, the thief."

"The thief! Pull him out, pull him out!"

The gendarme had put his arms under the bed and laid hold of something, and he was pulling with all his might, and at last a foot, shod in a thick boot, appeared, which he was holding in his right hand. The brigadier took it, crying:

"Pull! Pull!"

And Lenient, who was on his knees by that time, was pulling at the other leg. But it was a hard job, for the prisoner kicked out hard, and arched up his back under the bed.

"Courage! courage! pull! pull!" Sénateur cried, and they pulled him with all their strength, so that the wooden bar gave way, and he came out as far as his head; but at last they got that out also, and they saw the terrified and furious face of Polyte, whose arms remained stretched out under the bed.

"Pull away!" the brigadier kept on exclaiming. Then they heard a strange noise, and as the arms followed the shoulders, and the hands the arms, they saw in the hands the handle of a saucepan, and at the end of the handle the saucepan itself, which contained stewed rabbit.

"Good Lord! good Lord!" the brigadier shouted in his delight, while Lenient took charge of the man; the rabbit's skin, an overwhelming proof, was discovered under the mattress, and then the gendarmes returned in triumph to the village with their prisoner and their booty.

* * * * * * *

A week later, as the affair had made much stir, Lecacheur, on going into the Mairie to consult the schoolmaster, was told that the shepherd Severin had been waiting for him for more than an hour, and he found him sitting on a chair in a corner, with his stick between his legs. When he saw the Mayor, he got up, took off his cap, and said:

"Good morning, Maître Cacheux;" and then he remained standing, timid, and embarrassed.

"What do you want?" the former said.

"This is it, Monsieur. Is it true that somebody stole one of your rabbits last week?"

"Yes, it is quite true, Severin."

"Who stole the rabbit?"

"Polyte Ancas, the laborer."

"Right! right! And is it also true that it was found under my bed. . . ."

"What do you mean, the rabbit?"

"The rabbit and then Polyte."

"Yes, my poor Severin, quite true, but who told you?"

"Pretty well everybody. I understand! And I suppose you know all about marriages, as you marry people?"

"What about marriage?"

"With regard to one's rights."

"What rights?"

"The husband's rights and then the wife's rights."

"Of course I do."

"Oh! Then just tell me, M'sieu Cacheux, has my wife the right to go to bed with Polyte?"

"What do you mean by going to bed with Polyte?"

"Yes, has she any right before the law, and,

seeing that she is my wife, to go to bed with Polyte? ''

'' Why, of course not, of course not.''

'' If I catch him there again, shall I have the right to thrash him and her also? ''

'' Why . . . why . . . why, yes.''

'' Very well, then; I will tell you why I want to know. One night last week, as I had my suspicions, I came in suddenly, and they were not behaving properly. I chucked Polyte out, to go and sleep somewhere else; but that was all, as I did not know what my rights were. This time I did not see them; I only heard of it from others. That is over, and we will not say any more about it; but if I catch them again . . . by G——, if I catch them again, I will make them lose all taste for such nonsense, Maître Cacheux, as sure as my name is Severin. . . .''

# THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

HE girl was one of those pretty and charming young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by a mistake of destiny, in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no way of being known, understood, loved, married, by any rich and distinguished man; so she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as if she had really fallen from a higher station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank, for beauty, grace, and charm take the place of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the sole hierarchy, and often make from women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

Mathilde suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself

born for all delicacies and all luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the shabby chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her despairing regrets and distracted dreams. She thought of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candelabra, and of two great footmen in knee-breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the stove. She thought of long salons hung with ancient silk, of the delicate furniture bearing priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth three days used, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup-tureen, and declared with a delighted air, "Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry that peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates, and of the whispered gallantries to which you listen with a sphinxlike smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no gowns, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt made for that. She

would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go to see any more, because she suffered so much when she came home.

But, one evening her husband arrived home with a triumphant air, and holding a large envelope in his hand.

"There," said he, "there is something for you."

She tore the paper quickly, and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Madame Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had great trouble to get it. Every one wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."

She looked at him with an irritated glance, and said impatiently:

"And what do you wish me to put on my back?"

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

"Why, the gown you go to the theater in. It looks very well to me."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he answered.

By a violent effort she conquered her grief, and replied, with a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I."

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could use on other occasions—something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied hesitatingly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He grew a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks there of a Sunday.

But he said:

"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty gown."

The day of the ball drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her frock was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I should almost rather not go at all."

"You might wear natural flowers," said her husband. "They're very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go look up your friend Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"True! I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told of her distress.

Madame Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross of gold and precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitated, but could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look further; I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a

superb diamond necklace, and her heart throbbed with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked waist, and was lost in ecstasy at the sight of herself.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anxious doubt:

"Will you lend me this, only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The night of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and intoxicated with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. All the attachés of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. She was remarked by the Minister himself.

She danced with rapture, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, admiration, these awakened desires, and of that sense of triumph which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She left the ball about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted anteroom, with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying the ball.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, the modest wraps of common life, the poverty of which contrasted with the elegance of the ball-dress. She felt this, and wished to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back, saying: "Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will call a cab."

But she did not listen to him, and rapidly descended the stairs. When they reached the street they could not find a carriage, and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen passing at a distance.

They went toward the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient night cabs which, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark.

It took them to their dwelling in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they climbed up homeward. All was ended, for her. As to him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry at ten o'clock that morning.

She removed her wraps before the glass so as to see herself once more in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She had no longer the necklace around her neck!

"What is the matter with you?" demanded her husband, already half undressed.

She turned madly toward him.

"I have—I have—I've lost Madame Forestier's necklace," she cried.

He stood up, distracted.

"What!—how?—Impossible!"

They looked among the folds of her skirt, of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere, but did not find it.

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, probably. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you—didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They looked, thunderstruck, at each other. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."

He went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball-dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband returned about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to police headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies—everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least spark of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace that ornament."

The next day they took the box that had contained it, and went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, Madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, search-

ing for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, both sick with chagrin and anguish.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds that seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they should find the lost necklace before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing whether he could meet it; and, frightened by the trouble yet to come, by the black misery that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures that he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace, Madame Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

Thereafter Madame Loisel knew the horrible ex-

istence of the needy. She bore her part, however, with sudden heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her dainty fingers and rosy nails on greasy pots and pans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts, and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her miserable money sou by sou.

Every month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked evenings, making a fair copy of some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

This life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households—strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window, and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How strange and changeful is life! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or saved!

But, one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysées to refresh herself from the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

"Good day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

"But — Madame!—I do not know—— You must have mistaken."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"

"Yes, I have had days hard enough, since I have seen you, days wretched enough—and that because of you!"

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And for this we have been ten years paying. You can understand that it was not easy for us, us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like."

And she smiled with a joy that was at once proud and naïve.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"

# THE MAN WITH THE DOGS

HIS wife, even in familiar conversation, always called him Monsieur Bistaud, but he was known in that neighborhood and for a radius of ten leagues in France and Belgium as the man with the dogs. It was not a very desirable reputation, however, and "the man with the dogs" became a sort of pariah, shunned by the whole town.

In Thierache they are not very fond of the custom-house officers, for everybody, high or low, profits by smuggling; thanks to it, many articles, and especially coffee, gunpowder, and tobacco, are to be had cheap. It may here be stated that in that wooded, uneven country, where the meadows are surrounded by brushwood and the lanes are dark and narrow, smuggling is carried on chiefly by means of sporting dogs, who are broken in to become smuggling dogs. Hardly an evening passes without some of them being seen, loaded with con-

traband goods, trotting silently along, pushing their noses through a hole in a hedge, with furtive and uneasy looks, and sniffing the air to scent the custom-house officers and their dogs. These dogs also are specially trained, and are very savage, and easily mangle the other unfortunate hounds, who become the prey instead of hunting it.

Now, no one was capable of training them so well as "the man with the dogs," whose business consisted in breaking in dogs for the custom-house authorities; and everybody looked upon it as a low business, a business which could only be performed by a man without any proper feeling.

"He is a robber of men," the women said, "to take honest dogs in to rear, and to make Judases out of them."

While the boys shouted insulting verses behind his back, and men and women abused him, no one ventured to do it to his face, for he was not very patient, and was always accompanied by one of his huge dogs, which served to make him respected.

Certainly, without that body-guard he would have had a bad time of it, especially at the hands of the smugglers, who had a deadly hatred for him. Taken alone, in spite of his quarrelsome looks, he did not appear very formidable, for he was short and thin with a round back and bow legs; his arms were as long and as thin as spiders' legs, and he could easily have been knocked down by a back-handed blow or a kick. But, then, he had those confounded dogs, which interfered with the bravest smugglers. How could they risk even a thrust when he had those huge brutes, with their fierce blood-shot eyes and their square heads, with jaws like a vice, and enormous white teeth, as sharp as daggers,

and molars that crunched beef-bones to a pulp? They were wonderfully trained, were always with him, obeyed his signs, and were taught not only to worry the smugglers' dogs, but also to fly at the throats of the smugglers themselves.

The consequence was that both he and his dogs were left alone, and people were satisfied to call them names and send them all to perdition. No peasant ever set foot in his cottage, although Bistaud's wife kept a small shop and was a handsome woman, and the only persons who visited it were the custom-house officers. The others took their revenge on them all by saying that the man with the dogs sold his wife to the custom-house officers as he did his dogs.

They jeered at his hair, which was certainly red, or, rather, yellow, and his thick eyebrows, which turned up in two points on his temples, and which he used to twirl mechanically as if they had been a pair of mustaches. Certainly, with his hair and his long beard and shaggy eyebrows, his sallow face, blinking eyes, and dull looks, with his dogged mouth, thin lips, and his miserable, deformed body, he was not a pleasing object.

But he assuredly was not a bad man, and those who spoke ill of him had never seen him at home. On the contrary, he was always jealous, and kept as sharp a lookout on his wife as he did on his dogs, and if he had taught her anything it was to be as faithful to him as they were.

She was handsome, and what they call in the country a fine figure of a woman; tall, well-built, with a full bust and broad hips, and she certainly made more than one excise man turn to look at her, but it was no use for them to come too near her,

or there would have been blows. At least, that is what the custom-house officers said when anybody joked with them about her.

It was no use for them to defend Madame Bistaud's good name; nobody believed them, and the only answer they got, was: "You are hiding something and are ashamed of being seen with a woman who belongs to such a wretched creature."

They did not know, however, that this man with the dogs had some years before given her, once for all, a lesson in fidelity on account of a mere trifle. He had surprised her allowing herself to be kissed by some gallant, that was all! He had not taken any notice, but when the man was gone he brought two of his hounds into the room, and said:

"If you do not want them to tear your inside out as they would a rabbit's, go down on your knees so that I may thrash you!"

She obeyed in terror, and the man with the dogs had beaten her with a whip until his arm dropped with fatigue. She did not venture to scream, although she was bleeding under the blows of the thong, which tore her dress and cut into the flesh; all she dared to do was to utter low, hoarse groans; for while beating her, he kept saying:

"Don't make a noise, by ——! Don't make a noise, or I will let the dogs fly at you."

From that time she had been faithful to Bistaud, though, of course, she had not told any one the reason for it, nor for her hatred either, not even Bistaud himself, who thought that she was subdued for all time, and who always found her very submissive and respectful. But for six years she had nourished her hatred in her heart, feeding it on silent hopes and promises of revenge. And it

was that flame of hope and that longing for revenge which made her so coy with the custom-house officers, for she hoped to find a possible avenger among her admirers.

At last she came across the right man. He was a splendid sub-official of the customs, built like a Hercules, with fists like a butcher's, and had long leased four of his ferocious dogs from her husband.

As soon as they had become accustomed to their new master, and especially after they had tasted the flesh of the smugglers' dogs, they had, by degrees, become detached from their former master, who had reared them. No doubt they still recognized him a little, and would not have sprung at his throat as if he had been a perfect stranger; but they did not hesitate between his voice and that of their new master, and obeyed the latter only.

Although the woman had often noticed this, she had not hitherto been able to avail herself of the circumstance. A custom-house officer, as a rule, keeps only one dog, and this fellow always had at least half a dozen in training, without reckoning a personal guard, which he kept for himself and which was the fiercest of all. But any duel between an admirer assisted by only one dog and the dog-breaker, defended by his pack, was out of the question.

On one occasion, however, the chances were more equal. Just then there were only five dogs in the kennel, and two of them were quite young, though certainly old Bourreau counted for several; but, after all, they could risk a battle against him and the other three, with the two couples of the custom-house officer, and they must take advantage of the occasion.

So, one fine evening, as the sub-official was alone

in the shop with Bistaud's wife and was squeezing her hand, she said to him abruptly:

"Do you really want to do something for me, Monsieur Fernand?"

He kissed her as he replied: "Do I really want to? I would give my stripes for you."

"Very well!" she replied, "do as I tell you, and upon my word, as an honest woman, I will be your sweetheart to do what you like with."

And, laying a stress on the word which in that part of the country means strumpet, she whispered hotly into his ear:

"I can tell you my beast of a husband has trained me in such a way that I am now absolutely disgusted with him."

Fernand, who was much excited, promised her everything she wished, and feverishly, malignantly she told him how shamefully her husband had treated her a short time before, how her fair skin had been lacerated, told him of her hatred and of thirst for revenge. The brigadier acquiesced, and that same evening he came to the cottage accompanied by his four hounds, with their spiked collars on.

"What are you going to do with them?" the man with the dogs asked.

"I have come to see whether you did not rob me, when you sold them to me," the brigadier replied.

"What do you mean by 'robbed you'?"

"Well, robbed! I have been told that they could not tackle a dog like your Bourreau, and that many smugglers have dogs who are as good as he."

"Impossible."

"Well, in case any of them should have one, I

should like to see how the dogs that you sold me could tackle them."

The woman laughed an evil laugh, and her husband grew suspicious, when he saw that the brigadier replied to it by a wink. But his suspicions came too late. The trainer had no time to go to the kennel to let out his pack, for Bourreau had been seized by the four dogs of the custom-house officer. At the same time the woman locked the door, and her husband was already lying motionless on the floor, while Bourreau could not go to his assistance, as he had enough to do to defend himself against the furious attack of the other dogs, who were almost tearing him to pieces, in spite of his strength and courage. Five minutes later two of the attacking hounds were totally disabled, with their entrails protruding, but Bourreau himself was dying, with a gaping wound in his throat.

Then the woman and the custom-house officer kissed each other before the trainer, whom they had firmly bound, while the two dogs of the custom-house officer that were still on their legs were panting for breath. This wretched couple were carrying on all sorts of capers to further excite the rage of the dog-trainer, who was forced to look at them, and who shouted in his despair:

"You wretches! you shall pay for this! And the woman's only reply was, to say: "Fool! Fool! Fool!"

When she was tired of larking, her hatred was not yet satisfied, and she said to the brigadier:

"Fernand, go to the kennels and shoot the five other brutes; otherwise he will make them kill me to-morrow. Off you go, old fellow!"

The brigadier obeyed, and immediately five shots

were heard in the darkness; it did not take long, but that short time had been enough for the man with the dogs to show what he could do. Although he was tied, the two dogs of the custom-house officer had gradually recognized him, and came and fondled him, and as soon as he was alone with his wife, as she was insulting him, he said in his usual voice of command to the dogs:

"At her, Flanbard! at her, Garou!" And the two dogs sprang at the wretched woman; one seized her by the throat, while the other caught her by the side.

When the brigadier came back she was dying on the ground in a pool of blood, and the man with the dogs said with a laugh: "There, you see that is the way I break in my dogs!"

The custom-house officer rushed out in horror, followed by his hounds, who licked his hands as they ran, covering them with blood.

The next morning the man with the dogs was found still bound, but chuckling, in his hovel, which was turned into a slaughter-house.

They were both arrested and tried, when the man with the dogs was acquitted, and the brigadier was sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The matter gave much food for talk in the district, and is indeed still talked about, for the man with the dogs returned there, and is more celebrated than ever under his nickname; but his celebrity is not of a bad kind, for he is now as much respected and liked as he was despised and hated formerly. He is still, as a matter of fact, "the man with the dogs," as he is rightly called, for he has not his equal as a dog-trainer for leagues round; but now he no longer breaks in mastiffs, as he has given up teaching hon-

est dogs to "act the part of Judas," as he says, for those dirty custom-house officers, and now he only devotes himself to dogs to be used for smuggling, and he is worth listening to when he says:

"You may depend upon it that I know how to punish such baggage as she was, where they have sinned!"

# A FALSE ALARM

"I HAVE a perfect horror of pianos," said Frémecourt, "those hateful boxes that fill up a drawing-room, and have not even the soft tone and the queer shape of the mahogany or veneered spinets to whose music our grandmothers sighed out exquisite, long-forgotten ballads, as their fingers ran over the keys, while around them there floated a delicate odor of powder and muslin, and some little abbé or other turned over the leaves, and was continually making mistakes, for he was looking at the patches close to the lips on the white skin of the player instead of at the music.

"I wish there were a tax on them, or that some evening during a riot the people would make huge bonfires of them, which would illuminate the whole town. They simply exasperate me and affect my nerves, and make me think of the tortures those poor girls must suffer who are condemned not to stir for hours, but to keep on constantly strumming

away at the chromatic scales and monotonous arpeggios, and to have no other object in life except to win a prize at the Conservatoire.

" Their incoherent music suggests to me the sufferings of those who are ill, abandoned, wounded, as it proceeds from every floor of every house and irritates you, nearly drives you mad, and makes you break out into fits of ironical laughter.

" And yet when that madcap Lâlie Spring honored me with her love, as I never can refuse anything to a woman who has a fragrance of fresh perfume, and who puts out her red, smiling lips immediately, as if she were going to offer you a bribe, I bought a piano, so that she might strum upon it to her heart's content. I got it, however, on the instalment plan, and paid so much a month, as people do for their furniture.

" At that time I had the apartments I had so long dreamed of: warm, elegant, light, well-arranged, with two entrances, and an incomparable porter's wife; she had been canteen-keeper in a zouave regiment, and knew everything and understood everything at a wink.

" They were rooms in which a woman forgets time, where she begins by accepting a cup of tea and nibbling a sweet cake, and abandons her fingers timidly and with regret to other fingers which tremble and are hot, and so by degrees she loses her head and succumbs.

" I do not know whether the piano brought us ill luck, but Lâlie had not even time to learn four songs before she disappeared like the wind, just as she had come, *flick-flack,* good night, good-by; perhaps from spite, because she had found letters from other women on my table, perhaps to renew her

advertisement, as she was not one of those to be true to one man and become a fixture.

"I had not been in love with her, certainly, but yet it always has some effect on a man, it breaks a spring when a woman leaves you, and you think that you must start again, risk it, and go in for forbidden sport in which one is exposed to knocks, common sport that one has been through a hundred times before, and which provides you with nothing to show for it.

"Nothing is more unpleasant than to lend your apartments to a friend, to have to say to yourself that some one is going to disturb the mysterious intimacy which really exists between the actual owner and his furniture, the soul of those past kisses which floats in the air; that the room whose tints you connect with some recollection, some dream, some sweet vision, and whose colors you have tried to make harmonize with certain fair-haired, pink-skinned girls, is going to become a commonplace lodging, like the rooms in an ordinary lodging house, which are suitable to hidden crime and to evanescent love affairs.

"However, poor Stanis had begged me so urgently to do him that service—he was so very much in love with Madame de Fréjus, and among the characters in the play there was a brute of a husband who was terribly jealous and suspicious; one of those Othellos who have always a flea in their ear, and come back unexpectedly from shooting or the club, who pick up pieces of torn paper, listen at doors, smell out meetings with the nose of a detective, and seem to have been sent into the world only to be cuckolds, but who know better than most how to lay a snare and to play a nasty trick

—that when I went to Venice I consented to let him have my room.

"I will leave you to guess whether they made up for lost time, although, after all, it is no business of yours. My journey, however, which was only to have lasted a few weeks—just long enough to benefit by the change of air, to rid my brain of the image of my last mistress, and, perhaps, to find another, among that strange mixture of society which one meets there, a medley of American, Slav, Viennese, and Italian women, who instil a little artificial life into that old city, which is asleep amid the melancholy silence of the lagunes—was prolonged, and Stanis was as much at home in my rooms as he was in his own.

"Madame Piquignolles, the retired canteen-keeper, took great interest in this adventure, watched over their little love affair, and, as she used to say, was on guard as soon as they arrived, one after the other, the Marchioness covered with a thick veil, and slipping in as quickly as possible, always uneasy, and afraid that Monsieur de Fréjus might be following her, and Stanis with the assured and satisfied look of an amorous husband who is going to meet his little wife after having been away from home for a few days.

"Well, one day, during one of those calm moments when his beloved one, fresh from her bath, and impregnated with the coolness of the water, was pressing close to her lover, reclining in his arms, and smiling at him with half-closed eyes, at one of those moments when people do not speak, but continue their dream, the sentinel, without even asking leave, suddenly burst into the room, for worthy Madame Piquignolles was in a terrible fright.

"A few minutes before a well-dressed gentleman, followed by two others of seedy appearance, but who looked very strong and fit to knock anybody down, had questioned her in a rough manner, and cross-questioned her, and tried to turn her inside out, as she said, asking her whether Monsieur de Fréjus lived on the first floor, without giving her any explanation, and when she declared that there was nobody occupying the apartments then, as her lodger was not in France, Monsieur de Fréjus—for it could certainly be nobody but he—had burst out into an evil laugh, and said: 'Very well; I shall go and fetch the police commissary of the district, and he will make you let us in!'

"And as quickly as possible, while she was telling her story, now in a low and then in a shrill voice, the woman picked up the Marchioness's dress, cloak, silk petticoat, and little varnished shoes, pulled her out of bed, without giving her time to let her know what she was doing, or to moan, or to have a fit of hysterics, and carried her off, as if she had been a doll, with all her pretty toggery, to a large empty cupboard in the dining-room, that was concealed by Flemish tapestry. 'You are a man. . . . Try to get out of the mess,' she said to Stanis as she shut the door; 'I will be answerable for Madame.' And the enormous woman, who was out of breath by hurrying upstairs as she had done, and whose kind, large red face was dripping with perspiration, while her ample bosom shook beneath her loose jacket, took Madame de Fréjus on to her knees as if she had been a baby whose nurse was trying to quiet her.

"She felt the poor little culprit's heart beating as if it were going to burst, while shivers ran over

her skin, which was so soft and delicate that the porter's wife was afraid that she should hurt it with her coarse hands. She was struck with wonder at the cambric chemise which a gust of wind would have carried off as if it had been a pigeon's feather, and by the delicate odor of that scarce flower which filled the narrow cupboard, and which rose up in the darkness from that supple body, that was impregnated with the warmth of the bed.

" She would have liked to be there, in that profaned room, and to tell them in a loud voice—with her hands upon her hips as at the time when she used to serve brandy to her comrades at Daddy l'Arbi's—that they had no common sense, that they were none of them good for much, neither the police commissary, the husband, nor the subordinates, to come and torment a pretty young thing who was having a little bit of fun like that. It was a nice job, to get over the wall in that way, to be absent from the second call of names, especially when they were all of the same sort, and were glad of five francs an hour! She had certainly done quite right to get out sometimes and to have a sweetheart, and she was a charming little thing, and that she would say, if she were called before the court as a witness!

" And she took Madame de Fréjus in her arms to quiet her, and repeated the same thing a dozen times, whispered pretty things to her, and interrupted her occasionally to listen whether they were not searching all the nooks and corners of the apartment. ' Come, come,' she said; ' do not distress yourself. Be calm, my dear. . . . It hurts me to hear you cry like that. . . . There will be no mischief done, I will vouch for it.'

"The Marchioness, who was nearly fainting, and who was prostrate with terror, could only sob out: 'Good heavens! Good heavens!'

"She scarcely seemed to be conscious of anything; her head seemed vacant, her ears buzzed, and she felt benumbed, like one does when one goes to sleep in the snow.

"Oh! Only to forget everything, as her love dream was over, to go out quickly, like those little rose-colored tapers at Nice, on Shrove Tuesday evening.

"Oh! Not to awake any more, as the to-morrow would come in, black and sad, because a whole array of barristers, ushers, solicitors, and judges would be against her and disturb her usual quietude, would torment her, cover her with mud, as her delicious, amorous adventure—her first—which had been so carefully enveloped in mystery, and had been kept so secret behind closed shutters and thick veils, would become an every-day episode of adultery, which would get wind, and be discussed from door to door; the lilac had faded, and she was obliged to bid farewell to happiness, as if to an old friend who was going far, very far away, never to return!

"Suddenly, however, she started and sat up, with her neck stretched out and her eyes fixed, while the ex-canteen-keeper, who was trembling with emotion, put her hands to her left ear, which was her best, like a speaking trumpet, and tried to hear the cries which succeeded each other from room to room, amid a noise of opening and shutting of doors.

"'Ah! upon my word, I am not blind. . . . It is Monsieur de Tavernay who is applying again, and making all that noise. . . . Don't you hear, "Ma'me Piquignolles, Ma'me Piquignolles"?

Saved, saved!' And she dashed out of the cupboard like an unwieldy mass, with her cap all on one side, an anxious look, and heavy legs.

"' Tavernay was still quite pale, and in a panting voice he cried to them: 'Nothing serious, only that fool Frémecourt, who lent me the rooms, has forgotten to pay for his piano for the last five months, a hundred francs a month. . . . You understand . . . they came to claim it, and as we did not reply . . . why, they fetched the police commissary, and so, in the name of the law . . .'

"' 'A nice fright to give one!' Madame Piquignolles said, throwing herself on to a chair. 'Confound the nasty piano!'

"' It may be useless to add that the Marchioness has quite renounced trifles, as our forefathers used to say, and would deserve a prize for virtue, if the Academy would only show itself rather more gallant toward pretty women who take cross-roads in order to become virtuous.

"' Emotions like that cure people of running risks of that kind!"

## MOHAMMED THE RASCAL

SHALL we take our coffee on the roof?" asked the Captain.

"Very willingly," I answered.

He arose. It was already dark in the room, which was lighted only by an interior courtyard, according to the custom of Moorish houses. In front of the high, arched windows, lianas fell to the broad terrace, where one spent the warm summer evenings. Only the fruit remained on the table, enormous African fruits, grapes as large as plums, soft, purple-skinned figs, yellow pears, long, fat bananas, and Tougourt dates in a basket of alfalfa grass.

The dusky-skinned man who was serving us

opened the door, and I went up the azure-walled stairway, which received from above the soft light of the dying day.

When I had arrived on the terrace I heaved a deep sigh of well-being. It overlooked the harbor and the distant shores.

The house the Captain had bought was an old Arab dwelling, situated in the heart of that ancient city, in the midst of those winding alleys where the strange population of the African coast swarms.

Below us the square, flat roofs descended like giant steps to the oblique roofs of the European city. Behind these one could see the masts of the vessels riding at anchor, then the sea, the calm, blue, broad sea under the calm, blue sky.

We stretched out on some matting, our heads supported by cushions, and, while slowly drinking the savory coffee of that land, I watched the first stars pop out in the darkening sky. One could barely notice them, so far away, so pale, hardly visible.

A light, warm breeze was caressing us. And from time to time, heavier, hotter gusts, in which one could discern a vague odor, the odor of Africa, which seemed to be a breath of the desert, come from across the mountain ranges, would pass over us. The Captain, lying on his back, exclaimed:

"What a country, my friend! How sweet life is here! What a peculiar charm rest has here! How these nights are made for dreams!"

I was still watching the stars appear, with an idle yet lively curiosity, with a dreamy delight.

"You should tell me something of your life in the South," I murmured.

Captain Marret was one of the oldest officers in

the African service, who had arrived at his position by fighting his way there.

Thanks to him and to his wide-spread connections, I had been able to undertake a wonderful trip into the desert; and I had come that evening to thank him, before returning to France.

"What kind of story do you wish?" he asked. "I have had so many adventures during my twelve years in the sand that I can hardly remember any of them."

"Tell me something about the Arabian women," I continued.

He did not answer. He remained stretched out on the matting, his arms folded and his hands under his head, and from time to time, I could notice the faint perfume of his cigar, whose smoke went straight up toward the sky in the calm evening air.

Suddenly he began to laugh.

"Oh, yes! I'll tell you about a funny thing which occurred in the beginning of my stay in Algeria.

"At that time we had in the African division extraordinary types, such as we no longer see and such as are no longer in existence; types which would have interested you enough to make you spend your whole life in this country.

"I was a simple spahi, a little twenty-two-year-old spahi, blond, plucky, limber, and vigorous, a regular Algerian soldier, my friend. I was assigned to the military detachment at Boghar. You know Boghar, which is called the balcony of the South; from the top of the fort you saw that country of fire, brown, bare, harassed, and stony. That is the real vestibule of the desert, the scorching yet wonderful frontier of the yellow loneliness.

" At Boghar were about forty spahis, a good company of happy ones, plus a squad of African riflemen, when we learned that the tribe Ouled-Berghi had murdered an English traveler who had come to this country, no one knows how, for the English seem to be possessed by the devil.

" Justice had to be meted out for this crime against a European, but the commanding officer hesitated to send out a column, thinking that an Englishman was not really worth so much trouble.

" As he was talking the matter over with the Captain and the Lieutenant, a sergeant of the spahis, who was waiting to report, suddenly proposed to chastise the whole tribe if they would only give him six men.

" You know that in the South there is much more freedom than in the city garrisons, and between soldier and officer exists a certain friendship which one finds nowhere else.

" The Captain began to laugh:

" ' You, my man? '

" ' Yes, Captain, and if you wish I will bring the whole tribe back, prisoners.'

" The commanding officer, who was a whimsical sort of a being, took him at his word:

" ' You will leave to-morrow morning, with six men of your own picking, and if you don't fulfil your promise look out for yourself! '

" The sergeant smiled.

" ' Fear nothing, sir. My prisoners shall be here Wednesday noon, at the latest.'

" This sergeant, Mohammed the Rascal, as he was called, was really a remarkable man; he was a Turk, a real Turk, who had entered the service of France after a very varied and doubtless checkered

life. He had traveled through many lands: Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, and he must have left his mark in many of these places. He was a regular *bashi-bazouk,* hardy, a reveler, fierce and gay, with a calm, Oriental gayety. He was fat, very fat, but as nimble as a monkey, and he rode horseback beautifully. His mustache, incredibly thick and long, invariably brought to my mind a confused image of crescents and of scimitars. He hated the Arabs with an inexorable fierceness, and he treated them with a terrible, sly cruelty, continually inventing new tricks, fearful and well-calculated acts of perfidy.

" Besides all this, he possessed marvelous physical strength and was gifted with wonderful audacity.

" ' Choose your men, my boy.'

" Mohammed took me. He had confidence in me, and I remained devoted to him, body and soul, for this choice, which pleased me as much then as the cross of honor pleased me later.

" The following morning at dawn we left, just seven of us. My comrades were all of those bandits and pirates who, having marauded and prowled around in every possible land, end by enlisting in some foreign legion. Our African division used to be full of these blackguards, who were excellent soldiers, but not overscrupulous.

" Mohammed had given to each of us ten pieces of rope, each about a yard long. Being the youngest and the lightest, I was given, in addition, a long rope, a hundred yards long. When he was asked what he expected to do with all this rope, he answered with his cunning, calm expression:

" ' We'll use that for Arab fishing.'

" And he slyly winked his eye, a trick he had learned from an old African rifleman, who came from Paris.

" He rode at the head of our troop, wearing a red turban which he always wore in action, and smiling through his big mustache.

" This enormous Turk was really magnificent, with his powerful chest, his great shoulders, and his quiet look. He rode a white horse, of medium size but sturdy; and the rider seemed ten times too heavy for his mount.

" We had entered a rocky little dell, bare, yellow, which extends to the valley of Chelif, and we were talking about our expedition. My companions had every imaginable accent, for among them were one Spaniard, two Greeks, one American, and three Frenchmen. As for Mohammed, he burred in a manner truly marvelous.

" The sun, the terrible southern sun, which is not known on the other side of the Mediterranean, was beating down on our shoulders, and we were advancing slowly, as one always does over there.

" We traveled all day long without seeing either a tree or an Arab.

" At about one o'clock in the afternoon, near a little spring which trickled through the rocks, we had eaten the bread and dried mutton we had taken with us; then, after about twenty minutes' rest, we started again.

" Toward six o'clock in the evening, after making a long turn out of the way, according to the orders of our leader, we discovered a tribe encamped behind a small hill. The low, brown tents made dark spots against the yellow earth, looking like big

desert mushrooms growing at the foot of this red hillock, burned by the sun.

"They were the ones we were looking for. Their horses were grazing a little farther away, at the edge of a field of dark-green alfalfa grass.

"Mohammed gave the order: 'Gallop!' and we rushed into the middle of the camp like a hurricane. The women, wild with fright, covered with white rags which hung and floated around them, quickly ran for their tents, crawling, wriggling, and shrieking like hunted beasts. The men, on the other hand, rushed out from all sides, ready to defend themselves.

"We went straight for the largest tent, that of the agha.

"We kept our swords sheathed, following the example of Mohammed, who was galloping in a peculiar manner. He sat perfectly straight, absolutely motionless on his little horse, which was straining furiously under this ponderous mass. The calmness of the horseman with the long mustache contrasted strangely with the vivacity of the animal.

"The native chief came out of his tent just as we were arriving before it. He was a tall, thin, dark man, with piercing eyes, a high forehead, and arched eyebrows. He cried in Arabic:

"'What do you wish?'

"Mohammed, stopping his horse short, answered the man in his own language:

"'Is it you that killed the English traveler?'

"The agha answered in a clear voice:

"'I have no reason for answering your question.'

Around us a storm was brewing. The Arabs

were assembling on all sides, were crowding around us and shouting at us.

" They looked like fierce birds of prey, with their large hooked noses, their thin faces with high cheek-bones, their loose garments fluttering in the wind.

" Mohammed, with his turban on the side of his head, was smiling, his eye was sparkling, one could almost see little thrills of pleasure on his plump, wrinkled cheeks.

" He continued in a thundering voice, which drowned the rising clamor:

" ' Death to him who has given death! '

" He pointed his revolver toward the brown face of the agha. I saw a little smoke issue from the barrel; then a little froth of pink brains and blood spurted from the chief's forehead. He fell on his back like a log, opening his arms, which spread out the floating folds of his burnous like giant wings.

" I certainly thought that my last day had come, so great was the tumult around us.

" Mohammed had drawn his sword. We followed his example. Swinging the weapon around him in a circle, he cried:

" ' Life to those who surrender! Death to the others! '

" Seizing in his herculean grip the man nearest him, he flattened him out on his saddle and tied his hands, crying to us:

" ' Do as I do, and kill all who resist.'

" In five minutes we had captured about twenty Arabs, whose arms we bound firmly. Then we chased the fugitives; for it had been a perfect rout as soon as they had seen our naked swords. We brought back about thirty more men.

" All over the plain we could see white specks

running madly. The women were dragging their children around and shrieking in a shrill voice. Yellow dogs, like jackals, were circling about us and barking, showing their white fangs.

" Mohammed, who seemed wild with joy, sprang from his horse and seized the rope which I had brought along:

" ' Look out now, my lads,' he said. ' Two of you dismount! '

" Then he did a terrible yet funny thing: he made a string of prisoners, tied so that they were practically hanged. He had firmly tied the fists of the first captive, then he made a slip-knot which he passed around his neck, and then with the same rope he tied the arms of the following man and then passed the rope around his neck. Our fifty prisoners soon found themselves so tied that the slightest movement of one of them toward escape would have strangled him as well as his two neighbors.

" Every motion they made tightened the knots around their necks, and they had to walk in step and at even distances, otherwise they would choke like rats in a trap.

" When this strange business was finished, Mohammed began to laugh with his silent laugh which shook his whole body without any noise issuing from his mouth.

" ' That's the Arabian chain,' he said.

" We ourselves began to be convulsed with laughter at the surprised and pitiful expressions of our prisoners.

" ' Now, children,' cried our leader, ' drive a stake in at each end and we'll tie up the bunch.'

" A stake was driven at each end of this white

string of captives, looking like ghosts, who stood motionless, as if they had been changed to stone.

"'Now, let's have dinner!' said the Turk.

"A fire was kindled and we roasted a lamb, which we carved with our hands. Then we ate some dates we had found in the tents; we drank milk obtained in the same manner, and we managed to pick up a few silver trinkets forgotten by the fugitives in their haste.

"We were just quietly finishing our meal when I noticed, on the opposite hill, a strange-looking crowd. It was the women who had escaped a short while ago, nothing but women. They were running toward us. I pointed them out to Mohammed the Rascal.

"He smiled.

"'It's the dessert!' he said.

"Ah! Yes, the dessert!

"They came, galloping wildly, and soon we received a hail of stones which they threw without stopping their horses. As they passed by we saw that they were armed with knives, tent stakes, and old kitchen utensils.

"Mohammed cried: 'Mount!' It was high time. The attack was terrible. They came to free the prisoners and were trying to cut the rope. The Turk, seeing the danger, became furious and yelled: 'Kill them! Kill them! Kill them!' As we remained motionless, undecided before this new kind of attack, hesitating to kill the men, he rushed forward against the approaching troop.

"Alone, he charged this brigade of women in rags, and the rascal began to slash around like a wild man, with such rage, with such fierceness, that

one could see a white body fall each time his arm went down.

"He was so fierce that the women, frightened, escaped as quickly as they had come, leaving behind them a dozen dead and wounded whose red blood stained their white garments.

"Mohammed, his features convulsed, returned to us, saying:

"'Come on, my lads; we had better get out of here; they will come back.'

"We retreated slowly, leaving our prisoners paralyzed by the fear of strangulation.

"The following day, as noon was ringing, we arrived at Boghar with our human chain. Only six had died on the way, but we had often been forced to loosen the knots from one end of the line to the other, for a single jolt would strangle a dozen captives."

The Captain was silent. I answered nothing. I was thinking of the strange country where such things could be seen; and in the black sky I gazed at the myriads of twinkling stars.

# DENIS

## I

*To Léon Chapron*

MARAMBOT opened the letter which his servant Denis gave him, and smiled.

For twenty years Denis had been serving in this house. He was a short, stocky, jovial man, who was known throughout the country-side as a model servant. He asked:

"Is Monsieur pleased? Has Monsieur received good news?"

M. Marambot was not rich. He was an old village druggist, a bachelor, who lived on an income acquired with difficulty by selling drugs to the farmers. He answered:

"Yes, my boy. Old man Malois is afraid of the law-suit with which I am threatening him. I shall get my money to-morrow. Five thousand francs are not liable to harm the account of an old bachelor."

M. Marambot rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He was a man of a quiet temperament, more sad than gay, incapable of any prolonged effort, careless in business.

He could undoubtedly have amassed a greater income had he taken advantage of the deaths of colleagues established in more important centers by taking their places and carrying on their business. But the trouble of moving and the thought of all the preparations had always stopped him. After thinking the matter over for a few days, he would be satisfied to say:

"Bah! I'll wait until the next time. I'll not lose anything by the delay. I may even find something better."

Denis, on the contrary, was always urging his master to new enterprises. Of a lively temperament, he would continually repeat:

"Oh! If I had only had the capital to start out with, I could have made a fortune! One thousand francs would do me."

M. Marmabot would smile without answering and would go out in his little garden, where, his hands behind his back, he would walk around, dreaming.

All day long, Denis sang the joyful refrains of the folk-songs of the neighborhood. He even showed an unusual activity, for he cleaned all the windows of the house, energetically rubbing the glass, and singing at the top of his voice.

M. Marambot, surprised at his zeal, told him several times, smiling:

"My boy, if you work like that there will be nothing left for you to do to-morrow."

The following day, at about nine o'clock in the morning, the postman gave Denis four letters for his master, one of them very heavy. M. Marmabot im-

mediately shut himself up in his room until late in the afternoon. He then handed his servant four letters for the mail. One of them was addressed to M. Malois; it was undoubtedly a receipt for the money.

Denis asked his master no questions; he appeared to be as sad and gloomy that day as he had seemed joyful the day before.

Night came. M. Marambot went to bed as usual and slept.

He was awakened by a strange noise. He sat up in his bed and listened. Suddenly the door opened, and Denis appeared, holding in one hand a candle and in the other a carving-knife, his eyes staring, his face contracted as though moved by some deep emotion; he was as pale as a ghost.

M. Marambot, astonished, thought that he was sleep-walking, and he was going to get out of bed and assist him when the servant blew out the light and rushed for the bed. His master stretched out his hands to receive the shock which knocked him over on his back; he was trying to seize the hands of his servant, whom he now thought to be crazy, in order to avoid the blows which the latter was aiming at him.

He was struck by the knife; once in the shoulder, once in the forehead and the third time in the chest. He fought wildly, waving his arms around in the darkness, kicking and crying:

"Denis! Denis! Are you mad? Listen, Denis!"

But the latter, gasping for breath, kept up his furious attack, always striking, always repulsed, sometimes with a kick, sometimes with a punch, and rushing forward again furiously.

M. Marambot was wounded twice more, once in the leg and once in the stomach. But suddenly a

thought flashed across his mind, and he began to shriek:

"Stop, stop, Denis, I have not yet received my money!"

The man immediately ceased, and his master could hear his labored breathing in the darkness.

M. Marambot immediately went on:

"I have received nothing. M. Malois takes back what he said, the law-suit will take place; that is why you carried the letters to the mail. Just read those on my desk."

With a final effort, he reached for his matches and lit the candle.

He was covered with blood. His sheets, his curtains, and even the walls, were spattered with red. Denis, standing in the middle of the room, was also bloody from head to foot.

When he saw that, M. Marambot thought himself dead, and he fell unconscious.

At the break of day he revived. It was some time, however, before he regained his senses, and was able to understand or remember. But suddenly the memory of the attack and of his wounds returned to him, and he was filled with such fright that he closed his eyes in order not to see anything. After a few minutes he grew calmer and began to think. He had not died immediately, therefore he might still recover. He felt weak, very weak; but he had no real pain, although he noticed an uncomfortable smarting sensation in several parts of his body. He also felt icy cold, and all wet, and as though wrapped up in bandages. He thought that this dampness came from the blood which he had lost; and he shivered at the dreadful thought of this red liquid which had come from his veins and covered his bed. The idea of seeing this terrible

spectacle again so upset him that he kept his eyes closed with all his strength, as though they might open in spite of himself.

What had become of Denis? He had probably escaped.

But what could he, Marambot, do now? Get up? Call for help? But if he should make the slightest motions, his wounds would undoubtedly open up again and he would die from loss of blood.

Suddenly he heard the door of his room open. His heart almost stopped. It was certainly Denis who was coming to finish him up. He held his breath in order to make the murderer think that he had been successful.

He felt his sheet being lifted up, and then someone feeling his stomach. A sharp pain near his hip made him start. He was being very gently washed with cold water. Therefore, someone must have discovered the misdeed and he was being cared for. A wild joy seized him; but prudently, he did not wish to show that he was conscious. He opened one eye, just one, with the greatest precaution.

He recognized Denis standing beside him, Denis himself! Mercy! He hastily closed his eye again.

Denis! What could he be doing? What did he want? What awful scheme could he now be carrying out?

What was he doing? Well, he was washing him in order to hide the traces of his crime! And he would now bury him in the garden, under ten feet of earth, so that no one could discover him! Or perhaps under the wine cellar! And M. Marambot began to tremble like a leaf. He kept saying to himself: "I am lost, lost!" He closed his eyes so as not to see the knife as it descended for the final stroke. It did not come. Denis was now lifting him

up and bandaging him. Then he began carefully to dress the wound on his leg, as his master had taught him to do.

There was no longer any doubt. His servant, after wishing to kill him, was trying to save him.

Then M. Marambot, in a dying voice, gave him this practical piece of advice:

" Wash the wounds in a dilute solution of carbolic acid! "

Denis answered:

" That is what I am doing, Monsieur."

M. Marambot opened both his eyes. There was no sign of blood either on the bed, on the walls, or on the murderer. The wounded man was stretched out on clean white sheets.

The two men looked at each other.

Finally M. Marambot said calmly:

" You have been guilty of a great crime."

Denis answered:

" I am trying to make up for it, Monsieur. If you will not tell on me, I will serve you as faithfully as in the past."

This was no time to anger his servant. M. Marambot murmured as he closed his eyes:

" I swear not to tell on you."

## II

Denis saved his master. He spent days and nights without sleep, never leaving the sick-room, preparing drugs, broths, potions, feeling his pulse, anxiously counting the beats, attending him with the skill of a trained nurse and the devotion of a son.

He was all the time asking:

"Well, Monsieur, how do you feel?"

M. Marambot would answer in a weak voice:

"A little better, my boy, thank you."

And when the sick man would wake up at night, he would often see his servant seated in an armchair, weeping silently.

Never had the old druggist been so cared for, so fondled, so spoiled. At first he had said to himself:

"As soon as I am well I shall get rid of this rascal."

He was now convalescing, and from day to day he would put off dismissing his murderer. He thought that no one would ever have such care and attentions for him, since he held this man through fear; and he warned him that he had left a document with a lawyer denouncing him to the law if any new accident should occur.

This precaution seemed to guarantee him against any future attack; and he then asked himself if it would not be wiser to keep this man near him, in order to watch him closely.

Just as formerly, when he would hesitate about taking some more important store, he could not make up his mind to any decision.

"There is always time," he would say to himself.

Denis continued to show himself an admirable servant. M. Marambot was well. He kept him.

One morning, just as he was finishing breakfast, he suddenly heard a great noise in the kitchen. He hastened in there. Denis was struggling with two gendarmes. An officer was taking notes on his pad.

As soon as he saw his master, the servant began to sob, exclaiming:

"You told on me, Monsieur; that's not right, after what you had promised me. You have broken

your word of honor, Monsieur Marambot; that's not right, that's not right! ''

M. Marambot, bewildered and distressed at being suspected, lifted his hand:

'' I swear to you before the Lord, my boy, that I did not tell on you. I haven't the slightest idea how the police could have found out about your attack on me.''

The officer started:

'' You say that he attacked you, Monsieur? ''

The bewildered druggist answered:

'' Yes—but I did not tell on him—I haven't said a word—I swear it—he has served me excellently from that time on—''

The officer pronounced severely:

'' I will take down your testimony. The law will take notice of this new action, of which it was ignorant, Monsieur Marambot. I was commissioned to arrest your servant for the theft of two ducks lately stolen by him from Monsieur Duhamel, for which action there are witnesses. I shall take notice of your information.''

Then, turning toward his men, he ordered:

'' Come on, bring him along! ''

The two gendarmes dragged Denis out.

## III

The lawyer used a plea of insanity, contrasting the two misdeeds in order to strengthen his argument. He had clearly proved that the theft of the two ducks came from the same mental condition as the eight knife-wounds in the body of Marambot. He had cunningly analyzed all the phases of this transitory condition of mental aberration, which

could, doubtless, be cured by a few months' treatment in a reputable sanitorium. He had spoken in enthusiastic turns of the continued devotion of this faithful servant, of the care with which he had surrounded his master, wounded by him in a moment of alienation.

Touched by this memory, M. Marambot felt the tears rising to his eyes.

The lawyer noticed it, opened his arms with a broad gesture, spreading out the long black sleeves of his robe like the wings of a bat, and exclaimed:

"Look, look, gentleman of the jury, look at those tears. What more can I say for my client? What speech, what argument, what reasoning would be worth these tears of his master? They speak louder than I do, louder than the law; they cry: 'Mercy for the poor wandering mind of a while ago!' They implore, they pardon, they bless!"

He was silent and sat down.

Then the judge, turning to Marambot, whose testimony had been excellent for his servant, asked him:

"But, Monsieur, even admitting that you consider this man insane, that does not explain why you should have kept him. He was none the less dangerous."

Marambot, wiping his eyes, answered:

"Well, your honor, what can you expect? Nowadays it's so hard to find good servants—I could never have found a better one."

Denis was acquitted and put in a sanitorium, at his master's expense.

# THE STRANGER

WE were speaking of adventures, and each one of us was relating his story of delightful experiences, surprising meetings, on the train, in a hotel, at the seashore. According to Roger des Annettes, the seashore was particularly favorable to the little blind god.

Gontran, who was keeping mum, was asked what he thought of it.

"I guess Paris is about the best place for that," he said. "Woman is like a precious trinket, we appreciate her all the more when we meet her in the most unexpected places; but the rarest ones are only to be found in Paris."

He was silent for a moment, and then continued:

"By Jove, it's great! Walk along the streets on some spring morning. The little women, daintily tripping along, seem to blossom out like flowers. What a delightful, charming sight! The dainty perfume of violet is everywhere. The city is gay, and everybody notices the women. By Jove, how tempting they are in their light, thin dresses, which occasionally give one a glimpse of the delicate pink flesh beneath!

" One saunters along, head up, mind alert, and eyes open. I tell you, it's great! Then you see her in the distance; when still a block away, you already know that she is going to please you at closer quarters. You can recognize her by the flower on her hat, the toss of her head, or her gait. She approaches, and you say to yourself: ' Look out, here she is! ' You come closer to her and you devour her with your eyes.

" Is it a young girl running errands for some store, a young woman returning from church, or hastening to see her lover? What do you care? Her well-rounded bosom shows through the thin waist. Oh, if you could only take her in your arms and fondle and kiss her! Her glance may be timid or bold, her hair light or dark. What difference does it make? She brushes against you, and a cold shiver runs down your spine. Ah, how you wish for her all day! How many of these dear creatures have I met this way, and how wildly in love I would have been had I known them more intimately!

" Have you ever noticed that the ones we love most hopelessly are those whom we have never met? Curious, isn't it? From time to time we barely catch a glimpse of some woman, the mere sight of whom thrills our senses. Those are the only ones we notice. Personally, when I think of all the adorable creatures that I have elbowed in the streets of Paris, I fairly rave. Who are they? Where are they? Where can I find them again? There is a proverb which says that happiness often passes alongside of us; I am sure that I have often passed alongside of the one who could have given me supreme joy."

Roger des Annettes had listened smilingly. He answered: " I know that as well as you do. This

is what happened to me. About five years ago, for the first time I met, on the Pont de la Concorde, a young woman who made a wonderful impression on me. She was dark, rather stout, with glistening hair, and eyebrows which nearly met over two dark eyes. On her lip was a scarcely perceptible down, which made one dream—dream as one dreams of beloved woods, on seeing a bunch of wild violets. She had a small waist and a well-developed bust, which was presented as a challenge, offered as a temptation. Her eyes were like two black spots on white enamel. Her glance was strange, vacant, unthinking, and yet wonderfully beautiful.

" I imagined that she might be a Jewess. I followed her, and then turned around to look at her. She walked with a graceful, swinging stride. At the Place de la Concorde she took a carriage, and I stood there like a fool, moved by the strongest desire that had ever assailed me.

" For about three weeks I thought only of her; and then her memory passed out of my mind.

" Six months later I descried her in the Rue de la Paix again. On seeing her I felt the same shock that one experiences on seeing a once dearly beloved woman. I stopped that I might better observe her. When she passed close enough to touch me I felt as though I were standing before a red-hot furnace. Then, when she had passed by, I noticed a delicious sensation, as of a cooling breeze blowing over my face. I did not follow her. I was afraid of doing something foolish. I was afraid of myself.

" She haunted all my dreams.

" It was a year before I saw her again. But just as the sun was going down on one beautiful evening in May I recognized her walking along the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. The Arc de Triomphe

stood out in bold relief against the fiery glow of the sky. A golden haze filled the air; it was one of those delightful spring evenings which are the glory of Paris.

"I followed her, tormented by a desire to address her, to kneel before her, to pour forth the emotion which was choking me. Twice I passed by her only to fall back, and each time as I passed by I felt this sensation as of scorching heat which I had noticed in the Rue de la Paix.

"She glanced at me, and then I saw her enter a house on the Rue de Presbourg. I waited for her two hours and she did not come out. Then I decided to question the janitor. He seemed not to understand me. 'She must be visiting some one,' he said.

"The next time I was eight months without seeing her. But one freezing morning in January, I was following the Boulevard Malesherbes at a dog trot, so as to keep warm, when at the corner I bumped into a woman and knocked a small package out of her hand. I tried to apologize. It was she!

"At first I stood stock still from the shock; then, having returned to her the package which she had dropped, I said suddenly:

"'I am both grieved and delighted, Madame, to have jostled you. For more than two years I have known you, admired you, and had the most ardent wish to be presented to you; nevertheless I have been unable to find out who you are or where you live. Please excuse these foolish words. Attribute them to a passionate desire to be numbered among your acquaintances. Such sentiments can surely offend you in no way! You do not know me. My name is Baron Roger des Annettes. Make inquiries about me and you will find that I am a gentleman. Now, if you refuse my request, you will throw me into

abject misery. Please be good to me and tell me how I can see more of you.'

"She looked at me with her strange vacant stare, and answered smilingly:

"'Give me your address. I will come and see you.'

"I was so dumfounded that I must have shown my surprise. But I quickly gathered my wits together and gave her a visiting card, which she slipped into her pocket with a quick, deft movement.

"Becoming bolder I stammered:

"'When shall I see you again?'

"She hesitated, as though mentally running over her list of engagements, and then murmured:

"'Will Sunday morning suit you?'

"'I should say it would!'

"She went on, after having stared at me, judged, weighed and analyzed me with this heavy and vacant look which seemed to leave a quieting and deadening impression on the person towards whom she happened to glance.

"Until Sunday my mind was occupied day and night trying to solve the problem of my future conduct toward her. I finally decided to buy her a jewel, a pretty little jewel, which I placed in its box on the mantelpiece, and left it there awaiting her arrival.

"I spent a restless night waiting for her.

"At ten o'clock she came, calm and quiet, and with her hand outstretched, as though she had known me for years. Drawing up a chair, I took her hat and coat and furs, and laid them aside. And then, timidly, I took her hand in mine; after that all went on without a hitch.

"Ah, my friends! what a bliss it is, to stand at a discreet distance and watch the hidden pink and

blue ribbons partly out of sight, to observe the hazy lines of the beloved one's form, as they become visible through the last of the filmy garments! What a delight it is to watch the timid eagerness of the one whom you so ardently await!

" Her back was turned towards me, and my eyes were irresistibly drawn to a large black spot right between her shoulders. What could it be? Were my eyes deceiving me? But no, there it was, staring me in the face! Then my mind reverted to the faint down on her lip, the heavy eyebrows almost meeting over her coal-black eyes, her glossy black hair—I should have been prepared for some surprise.

" Nevertheless I was dumfounded, and my mind was haunted by dim visions of strange adventures. I seemed to see before me one of the evil genii of the *Thousand and One Nights,* one of these dangerous and crafty creatures whose mission it is to drag men down to unknown depths. I thought of Solomon, who made the Queen of Sheba walk on ice, that he might be sure that her feet were not cloven.

" And when the time came for me to sing of love to her, my voice forsook me. At first she showed surprise, which soon turned to anger; and she said, quickly drawing on her clothes:

" ' It was hardly worth while for me to go out of my way to come here.'

" I wanted her to accept the ring which I had bought for her, but she replied haughtily: ' For whom do you take me, sir? ' I blushed to the roots of my hair. She left without saying another word.

" There is my whole adventure. But the worst part of it is that I am now madly in love with her. I can't see a woman without thinking of her. All the others disgust me, unless they remind me of *her.* I cannot kiss a woman without seeing *her* face be-

fore me, and without suffering the torture of unsatisfied desire. She is always with me, always there, dressed or nude, my true love. She is there, beside the other one, visible but intangible. I am almost willing to believe that she was bewitched, and carried a talisman between her shoulders.

"Who is she? I don't know yet. I have met her once or twice since. I bowed, but she pretended not to recognize me. Who is she? An Oriental? Yes, doubtless an Oriental Jewess! I believe that she must be a Jewess! But why? Why? I don't know!"

# THE DOWRY

THE marriage of Maître Simon Lebrument with Mademoiselle Jeanne Cordier was a surprise to no one. Maître Lebrument had bought out the practice of Maître Papillon; naturally, he had to have money to pay for it; and Mademoiselle Jeanne Cordier had three hundred thousand francs clear in currency and in bonds payable to bearer.

Maître Lebrument was a handsome man. He was stylish, although in a provincial way; but, nevertheless, he was stylish—a rare thing at Boutigny-le-Rebours.

Mademoiselle Cordier was graceful and fresh-looking, although a trifle awkward; nevertheless, she was a handsome girl, and one to be desired.

The marriage ceremony turned all Boutigny topsy-turvy. Everybody admired the young couple, who quickly returned home to domestic felicity,

having decided simply to take a short trip to Paris, after a few days of close intimacy.

This *tête-à-tête* was delightful, Maître Lebrument having shown just the proper amount of delicacy. He had taken as his motto: "Everything comes to him who waits." He knew how to be at the same time patient and energetic. His success was rapid and complete.

After four days, Madame Lebrument adored her husband. She could not get along without him, she had to have him near her all the time in order to caress and kiss him, to run her hands through his hair and beard, to play with his hands and nose, etc. She would sit on his knees, and taking him by the ears she would say: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes." He would open his mouth wide and partly close his eyes, and he would try to nip her fingers as she slipped some dainty between his teeth. Then she would give him a kiss, sweet and long, which would make chills run up and down his spine. And then, in his turn, he would not have enough caresses, enough lips, enough hands, enough of himself to please his wife from morning to night and from night to morning.

When the first week was over, he said to his young companion:

"If you wish, we will leave for Paris next Tuesday. We will be like two lovers who are not married; we will go to the restaurants, the theaters, the concert halls, everywhere, everywhere!"

She was ready to dance for joy.

"Oh! yes, yes. Let us go as soon as possible."

He continued:

"And then, as we must forget nothing, ask your

father to hold your dowry in readiness; I shall pay Maître Papillon on this trip."

She answered:

"All right! I will tell him to-morrow morning."

And he took her in his arms once more, to renew those sweet games of love which she had so enjoyed for the past week.

The following Tuesday, father-in-law and mother-in-law went to the station with their daughter and their son-in-law who were leaving for the capital.

The father-in-law said:

"I tell you it is very imprudent to carry so much money around in a pocketbook." And the young lawyer smiled.

"Don't worry; I am accustomed to such things. You understand that, in my profession, I sometimes have as much as a million about me. In this manner, at least, we avoid a great amount of red tape and delays. You needn't worry."

The conductor was crying:

"All aboard for Paris!"

They scrambled into a car where two old ladies were already seated.

Lebrument whispered into his wife's ear:

"What a bother! I won't be able to smoke."

She answered in a low voice:

"It annoys me too, but not on account of your cigar."

The whistle blew and the train started. The trip lasted about an hour, during which time they did not say very much to each other, as the two old ladies did not go to sleep.

As soon as they were in front of the Saint-Lazare Station, Maître Lebrument said to his wife:

"Dearie, let us first go over to the Boulevard

and get something to eat: then we can quietly return and get our trunk and bring it to the hotel."

She immediately assented.

"Oh! yes. Let's eat at the restaurant. Is it far?"

He answered:

"Yes, it's quite a distance, but we will take the omnibus."

She was surprised:

"Why don't we take a cab?"

He began to scold her smilingly:

"Is that the way you save money? A cab for a five minutes' ride at six cents a minute! You would deprive yourself of nothing."

"That's so," she said, a little embarrassed.

A big omnibus was passing by, drawn by three big horses, which were trotting along. Lebrument called out:

"Conductor! Conductor!"

The heavy carriage stopped. And the young lawyer, pushing his wife, said to her quickly:

"Go inside; I'm going up on top, so that I may smoke at least one cigarette before lunch."

She had no time to answer. The conductor, who had seized her by the arm to help her up the step, pushed her inside, and she fell into a seat, bewildered, looking through the back window at the feet of her husband as he climbed up to the top of the vehicle.

And she sat there motionless, between a fat man who smelled of cheap tobacco and an old woman who smelled of garlic.

All the other passengers were lined up in silence —a grocer's boy, a young girl, a soldier, a gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles and a big silk hat, two ladies with a self-satisfied and crabbed look,

which seemed to say: " We are riding in this thing, but we don't *have* to," two sisters of charity, and an undertaker. They looked like a collection of caricatures.

The jolting of the wagon made them wag their heads and the shaking of the wheels seemed to deaden them—they all looked as though they were asleep.

The young woman remained motionless.

" Why didn't he come inside with me? " she was saying to herself. An unaccountable sadness seemed to be hanging over her. He really need not have acted so.

The sisters motioned to the conductor to stop, and they got off one after the other, leaving in their wake the pungent smell of camphor. The car started up and soon stopped again. And in got a cook, red-faced and out of breath. She sat down and placed her basket of provisions on her knees. A strong odor of dish-water filled the vehicle.

" It's further than I imagined," thought Jeanne.

The undertaker went out, and was replaced by a coachman who seemed to bring the atmosphere of the stable with him. The young girl had as a successor a messenger, whose feet exhaled the odor of his errands.

The lawyer's wife began to feel ill at ease, nauseated, ready to cry without knowing why.

Other persons left and others entered. The stage went on through interminable streets, stopping at stations and starting again.

" How far it is! " thought Jeanne. " I hope he hasn't gone to sleep! He has been so tired the last few days."

Little by little all the passengers left. She was left alone, all alone. The conductor cried:

"Vaugirard!"

Seeing that she did not move, he repeated:

"Vaugirard!"

She looked at him, understanding that he was speaking to her, as there was no one else there. For the third time the man said:

"Vaugirard!"

Then she asked:

"Where are we?"

He answered gruffly:

"We're at Vaugirard, of course! I have been yelling it for the last half-hour!"

"Is it far from the Boulevard?" she said.

"Which boulevard?"

"The Boulevard des Italiens."

"We passed that a long time ago!"

"Would you mind telling my husband?"

"Your husband? Where is he?"

"On the top of the 'bus."

"On the top! There hasn't been anybody there for a long time."

She started, terrified.

"What? That's impossible! He got on with me. Look well! He must be there."

The conductor was becoming uncivil.

"Come on, little one, you've talked enough! You can find ten men for every one that you lose. Now run along. You'll find another one in the street."

Tears were coming to her eyes. She insisted:

"But, Monsieur, you are mistaken; I assure you that you must be mistaken. He had a big portfolio under his arm."

The man began to laugh:

"A big portfolio! Oh! yes! He got off at the Madeleine. He got rid of you, all right! Ha! ha! ha!"

The stage had stopped. She got out and, in spite of herself, she looked up instinctively to the roof of the 'bus. It was absolutely deserted.

Then she began to cry, and, without thinking that anybody was listening or watching her, she said out loud:

"What is going to become of me?"

An inspector approached.

"What's the matter?"

The conductor answered, in a bantering tone of voice:

"It's a lady who got left by her husband during the trip."

The other continued:

"Oh! that's nothing. You go about your business."

Then he turned on his heels and walked away.

She began to walk straight ahead, too bewildered, too crazed even to understand what had happened to her. Where was she to go! What could she do? What could have happened to him? How could he have made such a mistake? How could he have been so forgetful?

She had two francs in her pocket. To whom could she go? Suddenly she remembered her cousin Barral, one of the assistants in the offices of the Ministry of the Navy.

She had just enough to pay for a cab. She drove to his house. He met her just as he was leaving for his office. He was carrying a large portfolio under his arm, just like Lebrument.

She jumped out of the carriage.

"Henry!" she cried.

He stopped, astonished.

"Jeanne! Here—all alone? What are you doing? Where have you come from?"

Her eyes full of tears, she stammered:

"My husband has just got lost!"

"Lost! Where?"

"On an omnibus."

"On an omnibus?"

Weeping, she told him her whole adventure.

He listened, thought, and then asked:

"Was he calm, this morning?"

"Yes."

"Good. Did he have much money with him?"

"Yes, he was carrying my dowry."

"Your dowry! The whole of it?"

"The whole of it—in order to pay for the practice which he bought."

"Well, my dear cousin, by this time your husband must be well on his way to Belgium."

She could not understand. She kept repeating:

"My husband—you say——"

"I say that he has disappeared with your—your capital—that's all!"

She stood there, a prey to conflicting emotions, sobbing.

"Then he is—he is—he is a villain!"

And, faint from excitement, she leaned her head on her cousin's shoulder and wept.

As people were stopping to look at them, he pushed her gently into the vestibule of his house, and, supporting her with his arm around her waist, he led her up the stairs, and as his astonished servant opened the door, he ordered:

"Sophie, run to the restaurant and get a luncheon for two. I am not going to the office to-day."

# THE CHRISTENING

ELL, doctor, a little brandy?"

"With pleasure."

The old ship's surgeon, holding out his glass, watched it as it was slowly filled by the golden liquid. Then, holding it in front of his eyes, he let the light from the lamp stream through it, smelled it, tasted a few drops and smacked his lips with relish. Then he said:

"Ah! the charming poison! Or rather the seductive murderer, the delightful destroyer of peoples!

"You people do not know it the way we do. You may have read that admirable book entitled *L'Assommoir,* but you have not, as I have, seen alcohol exterminate a whole tribe of savages, a little kingdom of negroes—alcohol calmly unloaded by the barrel by red-bearded English seamen.

"Right near here, in a little village in Brittany near Pont-l'Abbé, I once witnessed a strange and terrible tragedy caused by alcohol. I was spending my vacation in a little country house left me by my father. You know this flat coast where the wind whistles day and night, where one sees, standing or reclining, these giant rocks which in the olden times were regarded as guardians, and which still retain something majestic and imposing about them. I

always expect to see them come to life, and start to walk across the country with the slow and ponderous tread of giants, or to unfold enormous granite wings and fly toward the paradise of the Druids.

" Everywhere is the sea, always ready on the slightest provocation to rise in its anger and shake its foamy mane at those bold enough to brave its wrath.

" And the men who travel on this terrible sea, which with one motion of its green back can overturn and swallow up their frail barks—they go out in the little boats, day and night, hardy, weary and drunk. They are often drunk. They have a saying which says: ' When the bottle is full you see the reef, but when it is empty you see it no more.'

" Go into one of their huts; you will never find the father there. If you ask the woman what has become of her husband, she will stretch her arm out over the dark ocean which rumbles and roars along the coast. He remained there one night, when he had had too much to drink; so did her oldest son. She has four more big, strong, fair-haired boys. Soon it will be their time.

" As I said, I was living in a little house near Pont-l'Abbé. I was there alone with my servant, an old sailor, and with a native family which took care of the grounds in my absence. It consisted of three persons, two sisters and a man who had married one of them, and who attended to the garden.

" A short time before Christmas my gardener's wife presented him with a boy. The husband asked me to stand as godfather. I could hardly deny the request, and so he borrowed ten francs from me for the cost of the christening, as he said.

" The second day of January was chosen as the date for the ceremony. For a week the earth had

been covered by an enormous white carpet of snow, which made this flat, low country seem vast and unlimited. The ocean appeared to be black in contrast with this white plain; one could see it rolling, raging, and tossing its waves as though wishing to annihilate its pale neighbor, which appeared to be dead, it was so calm, quiet and cold.

" At nine o'clock the father, Kerandec, came to my door with his sister-in-law, the big Kermagan, and the nurse, who carried the infant wrapped up in a blanket. We started for the church. The weather was so cold that it seemed to dry up the skin and crack it open. I was thinking of the poor little creature who was being carried on ahead of us, and I said to myself that this Breton race must surely be of iron, if their children were able, as soon as they were born, to stand such an outing.

" We came before the church, but the door was closed, the priest was late.

" Then the nurse sat down on one of the steps and began to undress the child. At first I thought there must have been some slight accident, but I saw that they were leaving the poor little fellow naked, completely naked, in the icy air. Furious at such imprudence, I protested:

" ' Why, you are crazy! You will kill the child! '

" The woman answered quietly: ' Oh, no, sir; he must wait naked before the Lord.'

" The father and the aunt looked on undisturbed. It was the custom. If it were not adhered to misfortune was sure to attend the little one.

" I scolded, threatened and pleaded, I used force to try to cover the frail creature. All was in vain. The nurse ran away from me through the snow, and the body of the little one turned purple. I was about to leave these brutes when I saw the

priest coming across the country, followed by the sexton and a young boy. I ran towards him and gave vent to my indignation. He showed no surprise, nor did he quicken his pace in the least. He answered:

" ' What can you expect, sir? It's the custom. They all do it, and it's of no use trying to stop them.'

" ' But at least hurry up! ' I cried.

" He answered: ' But I can't go any faster.'

" He entered the vestry, while we remained outside on the church steps. I was suffering. But what about the poor little creature who was howling from the effects of the biting cold!

" At last the door opened. He went into the church. But the poor child had to remain naked throughout the ceremony. It was interminable. The priest stammered over the Latin words and mispronounced them horribly. He walked slowly and with a ponderous tread. His white surplice chilled my heart. It seemed as though, in the name of a pitiless and barbarous god, he had wrapped himself in another kind of snow in order to torture this little piece of humanity that suffered so from the cold.

" Finally the christening was finished according to the rites, and I saw the nurse once more take the frozen, moaning child and wrap it up in the blanket.

" The priest said to me: ' Do you wish to sign the register? '

" Turning to my gardener, I said: ' Hurry up and get home quickly so that you can warm that child.' I gave him some advice so as to ward off, if not too late, a bad attack of pneumonia. He promised to followed my instructions, and left with his sister-in-law and the nurse. I followed the priest into the vestry, and when I had signed he demanded five francs for expenses.

" As I had already given the father ten francs, I refused to pay twice. The priest threatened to destroy the paper and to annul the ceremony. I, in turn, threatened him with the district attorney. The dispute was long, and I finally paid five francs.

" As soon as I reached home I went down to Kerandec's to find out whether everything was all right. Neither father, nor sister-in-law, nor nurse had yet returned. The mother, who had remained alone, was in bed, shivering with cold, and starving, for she had had nothing to eat since the day before.

" ' Where the deuce can they have gone? ' I asked. She answered without surprise or anger: ' They're going to drink something to celebrate.' It was the custom. Then I thought of my ten francs which were to pay the church and would doubtless pay for the alcohol.

" I sent some broth to the mother and ordered a good fire to be built in the room. I was uneasy and furious, and promised myself to drive out these brutes, wondering with terror what was going to happen to the poor kid.

" It was already six, and they had not yet returned. I told my servant to wait for them, and I went to bed. I soon fell asleep, and slept like a top. At daybreak, I was awakened by my servant who was bringing me my hot water.

" As soon as my eyes were open I asked: ' How about Kerandec? '

" The man hesitated and then stammered: ' Oh! he came back, all right, after midnight, and so drunk that he couldn't walk, and so was Kermagan and the nurse. I guess they must have slept in a ditch, for the little one died and they never even noticed it.'

" I jumped up out of bed, crying:

" ' What! The child is dead? '

"'Yes, sir. They brought it back to Mother Kerandec. When she saw it she began to cry, and now they are making her drink to console her.'

"'What's that? They are making her drink!'

"'Yes, sir. I only found it out this morning. As Kerandec had no more brandy or money, he took some wood alcohol, which Monsieur gave him for the lamp, and all four of them are now drinking that. The mother is feeling pretty sick now.'

"I had hastily put on some clothes, and seizing a stick, with the intention of applying it to the backs of these human beasts, I hastened towards the gardener's house.

"The mother was raving drunk beside the blue body of her dead baby. Kerandec, the nurse, and the Kermagan woman were snoring on the floor. I had to take care of the mother, who died towards noon."

The old doctor was silent. He took up the brandy-bottle and poured out another glass. He held it up to the lamp, and the light streaming through it imparted to the liquid the amber color of molten topaz. With one gulp he swallowed the treacherous drink.

# THE HAIR-PIN

I SHALL disclose neither the name of the man nor that of the country. It was far, far away from here on a hot, fertile coast. All day long we had been following the shore covered with crops and the blue, blue ocean. Flowers were growing right near the little, lapping waves. It was hot, that moist, perfumed heat of damp, fertile soil.

I had been told that that night I would find shelter in the house of a Frenchman, who lived on a little promontory, in a grove of orange-trees. Who was he? I did not know. He had arrived one morning ten years before; he had bought land, sown and tilled it; he had worked with a perfect fury. Then from month to month, from year to year, he increased his property; and through tireless work, cent by cent, he had amassed a small fortune.

Nevertheless, he kept on working. Rising with the sun, his whole day was spent superintending the work which was bringing him in the money which he seemed so ardently to desire. Now he appeared to be quite rich.

The sun was setting as I reached his house, which was large, surrounded by orange-trees and overlooking the sea.

As I drew near, a heavily bearded man appeared on the threshold. I bowed and asked him if he could put me up for the night. He held out his hand smiling:

"Enter, my dear sir, and make yourself at home."

He took me to a room, and put a servant at my disposal with the familiar ease of the man of the world; then he left me, saying:

"We will dine when you are ready to come down."

We dined *tête-à-tête* on a terrace facing the sea. At first I spoke to him of this rich, distant, unknown land. He smiled and answered:

"Yes, this land is beautiful. But no country pleases you far from the land you love."

"Do you miss France?"

"I miss Paris."

"Why don't you go back there?"

"I expect to."

And then we began to talk of France, of the boulevards, and of the things of Paris. His questions showed me that he had moved in good society, and many of the names he mentioned were known to me.

"Who is to be seen at Tortoni's nowadays?"

"The same old ones, except for those who have died."

I watched him attentively, pursued by a vague memory. I surely had seen that face somewhere. But where? When? He seemed tired but robust, sad but firm. His long blond beard fell down over his chest, and he had a habit of grasping it in his

hand and then running his fingers through it. He was slightly bald, with heavy eyebrows and a long mustache.

Behind us, the sun, like a ball of fire, was softly dipping into the placid ocean. The sweet, heavy aroma of orange-blossoms was everywhere. His eyes were fastened on mine, and he seemed to see reflected in them the distant image of his beloved Paris.

"Do you know Boutelle?"

"Certainly."

"Has he changed?"

"He is snowy white now."

"And La Ridamie?"

"He is still the same."

"And the women? Tell me about the women. Let me see—do you know Suzanne Verner?"

"Yes. She is fat and forgotten."

"Ah! and Sophie Astier?"

"Dead."

"Poor child! Did you—do you know——"

He suddenly stopped talking and grew pale. Then in an altered voice he continued:

"No. I had better not talk of that. It upsets me too much."

Then, as though to change the topic, he arose.

"Do you wish to go inside?"

"All right."

And he persuaded me to enter the house.

The lower rooms were enormous, bare, sad, and seemed deserted. The dark-skinned servants had left plates and glasses scattered about everywhere.

My host smiled.

"This is the home, or rather the hut of an exile," he said. "But my room is a little neater. Let us go there."

When I first entered, I thought that I must be in some curiosity shop. The room was full of incongruous objects, queer and varied things which one understood immediately to be souvenirs. On the walls were two pretty copies of well-known paintings, tapestries, weapons both ancient and modern. Right in the middle of the most prominent panel was a square piece of white satin, enclosed in a heavy gilt frame. Surprised, I approached it in order better to observe it, and noticed a hair-pin fastened in the center of the rich material.

My host placed his hand on my shoulder.

"There," he said smiling, "is the only thing that I look at and the only thing that I have seen for ten years. Monsieur Prudhomme once exclaimed: 'This sword is the most beautiful day of my life.' I can say: 'This pin is all my life.'"

I hunted for some commonplace remark, and finally said:

"You have suffered through a woman?"

He answered gruffly:

"It would be truer if you were to say that I am suffering the tortures of the damned. But come out on the balcony. A name was on my lips a minute ago which I did not dare utter, for if you had answered 'dead,' as you did for Sophie Astier, I would have blown my brains out on the spot."

We were out on the balcony, from which we could see two bays, one to the right and one to the left, enclosed by great, gray mountains. It was the hour of twilight, when the earth receives its light from the reflected rays of the sun.

He continued:

"Is Jeanne de Limours still alive?"

He was staring at me with an expression of pitiful suffering.

I smiled.

"I should say so, and more beautiful than ever."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes."

He hesitated: "In full intimacy?"

"No."

He took my hand in his.

"Talk to me about her."

"But I have nothing to say. She is one of the most charming and courted women, or rather girls, in all Paris. She lives an easy and princely life. That's all."

He murmured: "I love her," just as he would have said: "I am going to die." Then, quickly: "Ah! for three years, ours was an entrancing yet terrible life. I all but killed her five or six times; she tried to put my eyes out with that hair-pin which you have just seen. Here, look at that little white spot under the pupil of my left eye. How we loved each other! I can't explain such a passion—you would not understand it.

"A simple love probably exists, one caused by the yearning of two hearts, of two souls; but there is also another kind of love, cruel and hard love, caused by the unconquerable attraction of two opposite natures which hate and adore each other.

"That girl ruined me in three years. I was worth four millions; she squandered them serenely, with that placid smile which seemed to drop from her eyes to her lips.

"Do you know her? There is something irresistible about her! What it is I don't know. Is it the piercing glance of her gray eyes, which pierces you like cold steel, and sticks like a barbed arrowhead? I think it is rather a sweet, indifferent, seductive smile which stays on her face like a mask. Her lan-

guorous gracefulness slowly wraps itself around your heart and holds it captive. Her easy motions and soft musical voice, her graceful gestures and winning smile are the very essence of poetry. For three years *she* was the only person I saw on the earth. How I suffered! She was unfaithful to me. With whom? With anybody! Why? Just in order to deceive me. When I found it out and accused her and upbraided her for it she calmly admitted it. ' Are we married? ' she asked.

" Since coming here, I have thought about her so much that I have finally come to understand her: that girl is Manon Lescaut returned to earth. She is Manon, who could not love without deceiving; Manon, for whom love and money were one."

He was silent. Then after a few minutes:

" When I had spent my last cent on her, she calmly said to me: ' You understand, my dear, that I can't live on fresh air and good weather. I love you dearly, better than anyone; but I must live. Poverty and I could never get along together.'

" If I were to tell you what a dreadful life I led with her! When I looked at her, I felt as much like killing her as I did like kissing her! When I glanced her way, I felt an overpowering desire to take her in my arms and hug her to death. There was something in her eyes, something treacherous and intangible which made me despise her; that is perhaps why I loved her so much. Woman, the cruel yet maddening Feminine, was stronger in her than in anybody I had ever known. She was more feminine than any other woman ever was.

" For instance, when I went out with her she would look at all the men, and would seem to offer herself to them through that one glance. That exasperated me, and yet attached me to her all the

more. Notwithstanding her modest and quiet manner, she seemed to belong to everybody who passed her in the street, in spite of myself, in spite of her, just by her nature. Do you understand what I mean?

"What torture! At the theater, in the restaurant, people seemed to snatch her from under my very eyes. And in truth, as soon as I left her alone she did belong to others.

"I have not seen her for ten years, and I love her more passionately than ever before."

Darkness had spread its somber cloak over the earth. The penetrating odor of orange-blossoms was floating through the air.

I said to him:

"Will you see her again?"

He answered:

"Of course! I am worth now, in land and money, about seven or eight hundred thousand francs. When the million is complete, I will sell all I own and leave. I will have enough to spend a year with her—one good year. And then farewell—my life will be over!"

I asked: "And then?"

"Then! I know not. All will be over! I may ask her to engage me as her servant."

## THE MORIBUND

THE warm autumn sun was beating down on the farmyard. Under the grass, which had been cropped off close by the cows, the earth, soaked by recent rains, was soft, and sank in under the feet with a soggy noise, and the apple trees, loaded with apples, were dropping their pale green fruit in the dark green grass.

Four young heifers, tied in a line, were grazing, and at times looking toward the house and lowing. The fowls made a colored spot on the dung-heap before the stable, scratching, moving around, and cackling, while two roosters crowed continually, digging worms for their hens, which they would call by a loud clucking.

The wooden gate opened and a man entered. He might have been forty years old, but he looked at least sixty, wrinkled, bent, walking slowly, impeded

by the weight of heavy wooden shoes, full of straw. His long arms hung down from both sides of his body. When he got near the farm, a little yellow pug-dog, tied to the foot of an enormous pear tree, beside a barrel which served as his kennel, began at first to wag his tail and then to bark for joy. The man cried:

"Down, Finot!"

The dog was quiet.

A peasant woman came out of the house. Her large, flat, bony body was outlined under a long jacket which was caught at the waist. A gray skirt, too short, fell to the middle of her legs, which were hidden in blue stockings. She, too, wore wooden shoes, full of straw. The white cap, turned yellow, covered a few hairs which were plastered to the scalp, and her brown, thin, ugly, toothless face had that brutal and savage expression which is often to be found on the faces of the peasants.

The man asked:

"How is he getting along?"

The woman answered:

"The priest said it's the end—that he will never live through the night."

Both of them went into the house.

After passing through the kitchen, they entered a low, dark room, barely lighted by one window, in front of which a rag was hanging. The big beams, turned brown with time and smoke, crossed the room from one side to the other, supporting the thin floor of the garret, where an army of rats ran around day and night.

The moist, lumpy dirt floor looked greasy, and, at the back of the room, the bed made an indistinct white spot. A harsh, regular noise, a difficult, hoarse, wheezing breathing, like the gurgling of

water from a broken pump, came from the darkened couch where an old man, the father of the peasant woman, was dying.

The man and the woman approached the dying man and looked at him with calm, resigned eyes.

The son-in-law said:

"I guess it's all up with him this time; he will not last the night."

The woman answered:

"He's been gargling like that ever since midday."

They kept silent. The father's eyes were closed, his face was the color of the earth, and so dry that it looked like wood. Through his open mouth came his harsh, rattling breath; and the gray canvas sheet rose and fell with each respiration.

The son-in-law, after a long silence, said:

"There's nothing more to do; I can't help him. It's a nuisance, just the same, because the weather is good and we've got a lot of work to do."

His wife seemed annoyed at this idea. She thought for a short time, and then declared:

"He won't be buried till Saturday, and that will give you all day to-morrow."

The peasant thought the matter over and answered:

"Yes, but to-morrow I'll have to invite the people to the funeral. That means five or six hours to go around to Tourville and Manetot, and to see everybody."

The woman, after meditating two or three minutes, declared:

"It isn't three o'clock yet; you could go out toward Tourville and begin. You can just as well say that he's dead, seeing as he's as good as that now."

The man stood perplexed for a while, weighing

the pros and cons of the idea. At last he declared:

"Guess I will!"

He started out, but came back after a minute's hesitation:

"As you haven't got anything to do, you might cut up some apples, and make four dozen dumplings to entertain those who come to the funeral. You can light the fire with the wood that's under the shed. It's dry."

He left the room, went back into the kitchen, opened the cupboard, took out a six-pound loaf of bread, cut off a slice, and carefully gathered the crumbs in the palm of his hand and threw them into his mouth, so as not to lose anything. Then, with the end of his knife, he scraped out a little salt butter from the bottom of an earthen jar, spread it on his bread and began to eat slowly, as he did everything.

He recrossed the farmyard, quieted the dog, which had started barking again, went out on the road bordered by his ditch, and disappeared in the direction of Tourville.

As soon as she was alone, the woman began to work. She got the meal-trough, and prepared the dough for the dumplings. She kneaded it for a long time, turning it over and over again, punching, pressing, crushing it. Finally she made a big, round, yellow-white ball, which she placed on the corner of the table.

Then she went to get her apples, and, in order not to injure the tree with a pole, she climbed up by means of a ladder. She chose the fruit with care, only taking the ripe ones, and gathering them in her apron.

A voice called from the road:

"Hey! Madame Chicot!"

She turned around. It was a neighbor, Osime Favet, the mayor, who was on his way to fertilize his fields, seated on the dung-wagon, with his feet hanging over the side. She turned around and answered:

"What can I do for you, Maître Osime?"

"And how is the father?"

She cried:

"He is as good as dead. The funeral is Saturday at seven, because there's lots of work to be done."

The neighbor answered:

"So! Good luck to you! Take care of yourself."

To his kind remarks she answered:

"Thanks; the same to you."

And she continued picking apples.

When she went back to the house, she went over to look at her father, expecting to find him dead. But as soon as she reached the door she heard his monotonous, noisy rattle, and, thinking it needless to go to him, not to lose any time she began to prepare her dumplings. She wrapped up the fruits, one by one, in a thin layer of paste, then she lined them up on the edge of the table. When she had made forty-eight balls, arranged by dozens, one in front of the other, she began to think of preparing supper, and she hung her kettle over the fire to cook potatoes; for she judged it useless to heat the oven that day, as she had all the next day in which to finish the preparations.

Her husband returned at about five. As soon as he had crossed the threshold, he asked:

"Is it over?"

She answered:

"Not yet; he's still gargling."

They went to look at him. The old man was in exactly the same condition. His harsh breathing, as regular as the ticking of the clock, was neither quicker nor slower. It returned every second, the key varying a little, according as the air entered or left his chest.

His son-in-law looked at him and then said:

"He'll pass away without our noticing it, just like a candle."

They returned to the kitchen and started to eat, without saying a word. When they had swallowed their soup, they ate another piece of bread and butter; then, as soon as the dishes were washed, they returned to the dying man.

The wo an, carrying a little lamp with a smoky wick, held i in front of her father's face. If he had not been breathing, one would certainly have thought him dead.

The couple's bed was hidden in a little recess at the other end of the room. Silent they went to bed, put out the light, closed their eyes; and soon two unequal snores, one deep and the other shriller, accompanied the uninterrupted rattle of the dying man.

The rats ran around in the garret.

The husband awoke at the first streaks of dawn. His father-in-law was still alive. He shook his wife, worried by the tenacity of the old man.

"Say, Phémie, he don't want to quit. What would you do?"

He knew that she gave good advice.

She answered:

"You needn't be afraid; he can't live through the day. And the mayor won't stop our burying him

to-morrow, because he allowed it for Maître Remard's father, who died just during the plowing season."

He was convinced by this argument, and left for the fields.

His wife baked the dumplings, and then attended to her housework.

At noon the old man was not yet dead. The people hired for the day's work came by groups to look at him. Each one had his say, then they left again for the fields.

At six o'clock, when work was over, the father was still breathing. At last his son-in-law was frightened.

"What would you do now, Phémie?"

She no longer knew how to solve the problem. They went to the mayor. He promised that he would close his eyes, and authorize the funeral for the following day. They also went to the health officer, who likewise promised, in order to oblige Maitre Chicot, to antedate the death certificate. The man and the woman returned, feeling more at ease.

They went to bed and to sleep, just as they did the preceding day, their healthy breathing mingling with the more feeble breath of the old man.

When they awoke, he was not yet dead.

Then they began to be frightened. They stood by their father, watching him with distrust, as though he had wished to play them a mean trick, to deceive them, to annoy them on purpose, and they were vexed at him for the time which he was making them lose.

The son-in-law asked:

"What am I going to do?"

She did not know, she answered:

"It certainly is vexing!"

The guests who were expected could not be warned away. They decided to wait, and explain the case to them.

Toward a quarter to seven, the first ones arrived. The women in black, their heads covered with large veils, looking very sad. The men, ill at ease in their homespun coats, were coming forward more slowly, in couples, talking business.

Maître Chicot and his wife, bewildered, received them in despair; and suddenly, both of them together, began to cry as they approached the first group. They explained the matter, related their difficulty, offered chairs, bustled around, tried to make excuses, attempting to prove that everybody would have done as they did, talking continually and giving nobody a chance to answer.

They were going from one person to another:

"I never would have thought it; it's incredible how he can last this long!"

The guests, taken aback, a little disappointed, as though they had missed an expected entertainment, did not know what to do, some remaining seated, others standing. Several wished to leave. Maître Chicot held them back:

"You must take something, anyhow! We made some dumplings; might as well make use of 'em."

The faces brightened at this idea. The yard was filling little by little; the early arrivals were telling the news to those who had arrived later. Everybody was whispering. The idea of the dumplings seemed to cheer everyone up.

The women went in to take a look at the dying man. They would cross themselves near the bed, mutter a prayer and go out again. The men, less anxious for this spectacle, would cast a look through the window, which had been open.

Madame Chicot explained her distress:

"That's how he's been for two days, neither better nor worse. Doesn't he sound like a pump without any water?"

When everybody had had a look at the dying man, they thought of the refreshments; but as there were too many people for the kitchen to hold, the table was moved out in front of the door. The four dozen golden dumplings, tempting and appetizing, arranged in two big dishes, drew to them the eyes of all. Each one reached out to take his, fearing that there would not be enough. But four remained over.

Maître Chicot, his mouth full, said:

"Father would feel sad if he were to see this. He loved them so much when he was alive."

A big, jovial peasant declared:

"He won't eat any more now. Each one in his turn."

This remark, instead of making the guests sad, seemed to cheer them up. It was their turn, now, to eat dumplings.

Madame Chicot, distressed at the expense, kept running down to the cellar, all the time, after cider. The pitchers were following one another in quick succession. The company was laughing and talking loud now, they were beginning to shout as they do during meals.

Suddenly an old peasant woman who had stayed near the dying man, held there by a morbid fear of the things which would soon happen to her, appeared at the window and cried in a shrill voice:

"He's dead! he's dead!"

Everybody was silent. The women arose quickly to go and see.

He was indeed dead. The rattle had ceased. The men looked at each other, looking down, ill at ease. They hadn't finished eating the dumplings. Certainly the rascal had not chosen a propitious moment.

The Chicots were no longer weeping. It was over; they were relieved. They kept repeating:

"I knew it couldn't last. If he could only have done it last night, it would have saved us all this trouble."

Well, anyhow, it was over. They would bury him on Monday, that was all, and they would eat some more dumplings for the occasion.

The guests went away, talking the matter over, pleased at having had the chance to see it and getting something to eat.

And when the man and the woman were alone, face to face, she said, her face contracted with anguish:

"We'll have to bake four dozen more dumplings! Why couldn't he have made up his mind last night?"

The husband, more resigned, answered:

"Well, we'll not have to do this every day."

# TWO LITTLE SOLDIERS

EVERY Sunday, as soon as they were free, the little soldiers would go for a walk. They turned to the right on leaving the barracks, crossed Courbevoie with rapid strides, as though on a forced march; then, as the houses grew scarcer, they slowed down and followed the dusty road which leads to Bezons.

They were small and thin, lost in their ill-fitting capes, too large and too long, whose sleeves covered their hands; their ample red trousers fell in folds around their ankles. Under the high, stiff shako one could just barely perceive two thin, hollow-cheeked Breton faces, with their calm, naïve blue eyes. They never spoke during their journey, going straight before them, the same idea in each one's mind taking the place of conversation. For at the entrance of the little forest of Champioux they had found a spot which reminded them of home, and they did not feel happy anywhere else.

At the crossing of the Colombes and Chatou roads, when they arrived under the trees, they would take off their heavy, oppressive headgear and wipe their foreheads.

They always stopped for a while on the bridge at Bezons, and looked at the Seine. They stood there

several minutes, bending over the railing, watching the white sails, which perhaps reminded them of their home, and of the fishing smacks leaving for the open.

As soon as they had crossed the Seine, they would purchase provisions at the delicatessen, the baker's, and the wine merchant's. A piece of bologna, four cents' worth of bread, and a quart of wine, made up the luncheon which they carried away, wrapped up in their handkerchiefs. But as soon as they were out of the village their gait would slacken and they would begin to talk.

Before them was a plain with a few clumps of trees, which led to the woods, a little forest which seemed to remind them of that other forest at Kermarivan. The wheat and oat fields bordered on the narrow path, and Jean Kerderen said each time to Luc Le Ganidec:

"It's just like home, just like Plounivon."

"Yes, it's just like home."

And they went on, side by side, their minds full of dim memories of home. They saw the fields, the hedges, the forests, and beaches.

Each time they stopped near a large stone on the edge of the private estate, because it reminded them of the dolmen of Locneuven.

As soon as they would get to the first clump of trees, Luc Le Ganidec would cut off a small stick, and whittling it slowly, he would walk on, thinking of the folks at home.

Jean Kerderen carried the provisions.

From time to time Luc would mention a name, or allude to some boyish prank which would give them food for plenty of thought. And the home country, so dear and so distant, would little by little gain possession of their minds, sending them back

through space, to the well-known forms and noises, to the familiar scenery, with the fragrance of its green fields and sea air. They no longer noticed the smells of the city. And in their dreams they saw their friends leaving, perhaps forever, for the dangerous fishing grounds.

They were walking slowly, Luc Le Ganidec and Jean Kerderen, contented and sad, haunted by a sweet sorrow, the slow and penetrating sorrow of a captive beast which remembers the days of its freedom.

And when Luc had finished whittling his stick, they came to the little nook, where every Sunday they took their meal. They found the two bricks, which they had hidden in a hedge, and they made a little fire of dry branches and roasted their sausages on the ends of their knives.

When their last crumb of bread had been eaten and the last drop of wine had been drunk, they stretched themselves out on the grass side by side, speechless, their half-closed eyes looking away in the distance, their hands clasped as in prayer, their red-trousered legs mingling with the bright colors of the wild flowers.

Toward noon they glanced, from time to time, towards the village of Bezons, for the dairy maid would soon be coming. Every Sunday she would pass in front of them on the way to milk her cow, the only cow in the neighborhood which was sent out to pasture.

Soon they would see the girl, coming through the fields, and it pleased them to watch the sparkling sunbeams reflected from her shining pail. They never spoke of her. They were only glad to see her, without understanding why.

She was a tall, strapping girl, freckled and tanned by the open air—a girl typical of the Parisian suburbs.

Once, on noticing that they were always sitting in the same place, she said to them:

"Do you always come here?"

Luc Le Ganidec, more daring than his friend, stammered:

"Yes, we come here for our rest."

That was all. But the following Sunday, on seeing them, she smiled with the kindly smile of a woman who understood their shyness, and she asked:

"What are you doing there? Are you watching the grass grow?"

Luc, cheered up, smiled: "P'raps."

She continued: "It's not growing fast, is it?"

He answered, still laughing: "Not exactly."

She went on. But when she came back with her pail full of milk, she stopped before them and said:

"Want some? It will remind you of home."

She had perhaps instinctively guessed and touched the right spot.

Both were moved. Then, not without difficulty, she poured some milk into the bottle in which they had brought their wine. Luc started to drink, carefully watching lest he should take more than his share. Then he passed the bottle to Jean. She stood before them, her hands on her hips, her pail at her feet, enjoying the pleasure that she was giving them. Then she went on, saying: "Well, bye-bye until next Sunday!"

For a long time they watched her tall form as it receded in the distance, blending with the background, and finally disappeared.

The following week as they left the barracks, Jean said to Luc:

"Don't you think we ought to buy her something good?"

They were sorely perplexed by the problem of choosing something to bring to the dairy maid. Luc was in favor of bringing her some rolls; but Jean, who had a sweet tooth, thought that candy would be the best thing. He won, and so they went to a grocery to buy two sous' worth of red and white candies.

This time they ate more quickly than usual, moved by anticipation.

Jean was the first one to notice her. "There she is," he said; and Luc answered: "Yes, there she is."

She smiled when she saw them, and cried:

"Well, how are you to-day?"

They both answered together:

"All right! How's everything with you?"

Then she started to talk of simple things which might interest them: of the weather, of the crops, of her masters.

They didn't dare to offer their candies, which were slowly melting in Jean's pocket. Finally Luc, growing bolder, murmured:

"We have brought you something."

She asked: "Let's see it."

Then Jean, blushing to the tips of his ears, reached in his pocket, and drawing out the little paper bag, handed it to her.

She began to eat the little round dainties. The two soldiers sat in front of her, moved and delighted.

At last she went to do her milking, and when she came back she again gave them some milk.

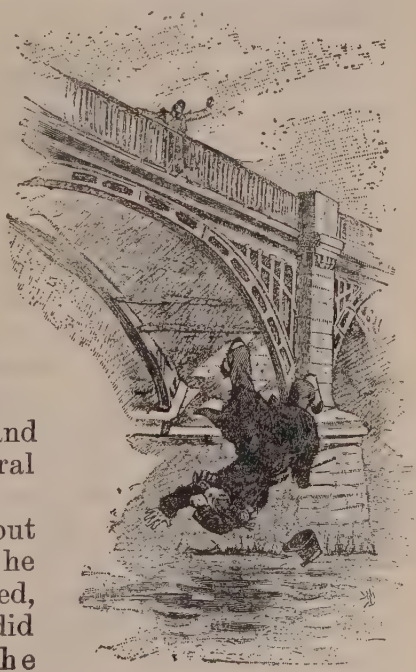
They thought of her all through the week and

often spoke of her. The following Sunday she sat beside them for a longer time.

The three of them sat there, side by side, their eyes looking far away in the distance, their hands clasped over their knees, and they told each other little odds and ends about the villages where they were born, while the cow, waiting to be milked, stretched her heavy head toward the girl and mooed.

Soon the girl consented to eat with them, and to take a sip of wine. Often she brought them plums in her pocket, for plums were now ripe. Her presence limbered up the little Breton soldiers, who chattered away like two birds.

One Tuesday something unusual happened to Luc Le Ganidec; he asked for leave and did not return until ten o'clock at night.



Jean, worried, racked his brain to find some reason to account for his friend's action.

The following Friday, Luc borrowed ten sous from one of his friends, and once more asked and obtained leave for several hours.

When he started out with Jean on Sunday he seemed queer, moved, changed. Kerderen did not understand; he

vaguely suspect something, but he could not guess what it might be.

They went straight to the usual place, and lunched slowly. Neither was hungry.

Soon the girl appeared. They watched her approach as they always did. When she was near, Luc arose and went towards her. She placed her pail on the ground and kissed him. She kissed him passionately, throwing her arms around his neck, without paying attention to Jean, without even noticing that he was there.

Poor Jean was dazed, so dazed that he could not understand. His mind was upset and his heart broken, without his even realizing why.

Then the girl sat down beside Luc, and they started to chat.

Jean was not looking at them. He understood now why his friend had gone out twice during the week. He felt the pain and the sting which treachery and deceit leave in their wake.

Luc and the girl went together to attend to the cow.

Jean followed them with his eyes. He saw them disappear side by side, the red trousers of his friend making a scarlet spot against the white road. It was Luc who sank the stake to which the cow was tethered. The girl stooped down to milk the cow, while he absent-mindedly stroked the animal's glossy neck. Then they left the pail in the grass and disappeared in the woods.

Jean could no longer see anything but the wall of leaves through which they had passed. He was unmanned so that he did not have strength to stand. He stayed there, motionless, bewildered and grieving—simple, passionate grief. He wanted to weep, to run away, to hide somewhere, never to see anyone again.

Then he saw them coming back again. They were walking slowly, hand in hand, as do the village lovers. Luc was carrying the pail.

After kissing him again, the girl went on, nodding carelessly to Jean. She did not offer him any milk that day.

The two little soldiers sat side by side, motionless as always, silent and quiet, their calm faces in no way betraying the trouble in their hearts. The sun set. From time to time they could hear the plaintive moaning of the cow. At the usual time they arose to return.

Luc was whittling a stick. Jean was carrying the empty bottle. He left it at the wine merchant's in Bezons. Then they stopped on the bridge, as they did every Sunday, and watched the water flowing by.

Jean leaned over the railing, farther and farther, as though he had seen something in the stream which hypnotized him. Luc said to him:

"What's the matter? Do you want a free drink?"

He had hardly said the last word when Jean's head carried away the rest of his body, and the little blue and red soldier fell like a shot and disappeared in the water.

Luc, paralyzed with horror, tried vainly to shout for help. In the distance he saw something move; then his friend's head bobbed up out of the water only to disappear again.

Farther down he again noticed a hand, just one hand, which appeared and again went out of sight. That was all.

The boatmen who had rushed to the scene found no body that day.

Luc ran back to the barracks, crazed, and with

eyes and voice full of tears he related the accident: "He leaned—he—he was leaning—so far over—that his head carried him away—and—he fell—he fell——"

Emotion choked him so that he could say no more. If he had only known!

# MAÎTRE BELHOMME'S BEAST

THE coach for Havre was ready to leave Criquetot, and all the passengers were waiting for their names to be called out, in the courtyard of the Commercial Hotel kept by Monsieur Malandain, Jr.

It was a yellow wagon, mounted on wheels which had once been yellow, but were now almost gray through the accumulation of mud. The front wheels were very small, the back ones, high and fragile, carried the large body of the vehicle, which was swollen like the belly of a beast. Three white horses, with enormous heads and great round knees, were the first things one noticed. They were harnessed ready to draw this coach, which had something of the appearance of a monster in its massive structure. The horses seemed already asleep before the strange vehicle.

The driver, Césaire Horlaville, a little man with a big stomach, supple nevertheless, through his constant habit of climbing over the wheels to the top of the wagon, his face all aglow from exposure to the brisk air of the plains, to rain and storms, and also from the use of brandy, his eyes twitching from the effect of constant contact with wind and hail, appeared in the doorway of the hotel, wiping his mouth

on the back of his hand. Large round baskets, full of frightened poultry, were standing in front of the peasant women. Césaire Horlaville took them one after the other and packed them on the top of his coach; then, more gently, he loaded on those containing eggs; finally he tossed up from down below several little bags of grain, small packages wrapped in handkerchiefs, pieces of cloth or paper. Then he opened the door, and drawing a list from his pocket he called:

"Monsieur le curé de Gorgeville."

The priest advanced. He was a large, powerful, robust man with a wrinkled and genial expression. He hitched up his cassock to lift his foot, just as the women hold up their skirts, and climbed into the coach.

"The schoolmaster of Rollebosc-les-Grinets."

The man hastened forward, tall, timid, wrapped in a long frock coat which fell to his knees, and he in turn disappeared through the open door.

"Maître Poiret, two seats."

Poiret approached, a tall, round-shouldered man, bent by the plow, emaciated through abstinence, bony, with a skin dried by a sparing use of water. His wife followed him, small and thin, like a tired animal, carrying a large green umbrella in her hands.

"Maître Rabot, two seats."

Rabot hesitated, being of an undecided nature. He asked:

"You mean me?"

The driver was going to answer with a jest, when Rabot dived head first towards the door, pushed forward by a vigorous shove from his wife, a tall, square woman with a stomach vast and round like a keg, and hands as large as hams.

Rabot slipped into the wagon like a rat entering a hole.

"Maître Caniveau."

A large peasant, heavier than an ox, bent the springs and was in turn engulfed in the interior of the yellow coffer.

"Maître Belhomme."

Belhomme, tall and thin, came forward, his neck bent, his head hanging, a handkerchief held to his ear as if he were suffering from a terrible toothache.

All these people wore the blue blouse over quaint and antique coats of a black or greenish cloth, Sunday clothes which they would only uncover in the streets of Havre. Their heads were covered by silk caps as high as towers, the emblem of supreme elegance in the small villages of Normandy.

Césaire Horlaville closed the door, climbed up on his box and snapped his whip.

The three horses awoke and, tossing their heads, shook their bells.

The driver then yelling "Get up!" as loudly as he could, whipped up his horses. They shook themselves, tugged at their traces, and started with a slow limping trot. And behind them came the coach, rattling its shaky windows and iron springs, making a terrible clatter of hardware and glass, while the passengers were tossed hither and thither like so many rubber balls.

At first all kept silent out of respect for the priest, that they might not shock him. Being of a loquacious and genial disposition, he started the conversation.

"Well, Maître Caniveau," said he, "how are you getting along?"

The enormous farmer who, on account of his size, waist-line and stomach, felt a bond of sympathy for

the representative of the Church, answered with a smile:

"Pretty well, Monsieur le curé, pretty well. And how are you?"

"Oh! I'm always well and healthy."

"And you, Maître Poiret?" asked the abbé.

"Oh! I'd be all right only the colzas aren't going to give much this year, and times are so hard that they are the only things worth while raising."

"Well, what can you expect? Times are hard."

"Huh! I should say they were hard," sounded the rather virile voice of Rabot's big consort.

As she was from a neighboring village, the priest only knew her by name.

"Is that you, Blondel?" he said.

"Yes, I'm the one that married Rabot."

Rabot, slender, timid, and self-satisfied, bowed smilingly, bending his head forward as though to say: "Yes, I'm the Rabot whom Blondel married."

Suddenly Maître Belhomme, still holding his handkerchief to his ear, began groaning in a pitiful fashion. He was crying "Oh—oh—oh!" and stamping his foot in order to show his terrible suffering.

"You must have an awful toothache," said the priest.

The peasant stopped moaning for a minute and answered:

"No, Monsieur le curé, it is not the teeth. It's my ear—way at the bottom of my ear."

"Well, what have you got in your ear? A lump of wax?"

"I don't know whether it's wax; but I know that it is a bug, a big bug, that crawled in while I was asleep in the haystack."

"A bug! Are you sure?"

"Am I sure? As sure as I am of heaven, Monsieur le curé! I can feel it gnawing at the bottom of my ear! It's eating my head for sure! It's eating my head! Oh—oh—oh!" And he resumed stamping.

Great interest had been aroused among the spectators. Each one gave his bit of advice. Poiret claimed that it was a spider, the teacher thought it might be a caterpillar. He had already seen that once, at Campemuret, in Orne, where he had been for six years. In this case the caterpillar had gone through the head and out of the nose. But the man remained deaf in that ear ever after, the drum having been pierced.

"It's more likely to be a worm," claimed the priest.

Maître Belhomme, his head resting against the door, for he had been the last one to enter, was still moaning.

"Oh—oh—oh! I think it must be an ant, a big ant—there it is biting again. Oh, Monsieur le curé, how it hurts! how it hurts!"

"Have you seen the doctor?" asked Caniveau.

"I should say not!"

"Why?"

The fear of the doctor seemed to cure Belhomme. He straightened up without, however, dropping his handkerchief.

"What! You have money for them, for those loafers? He would have come once, twice, three times, four times, five times! That means two five-franc pieces, two five-franc pieces for sure. And what would he have done, the loafer, tell me, what would he have done? Can you tell me?"

Caniveau was laughing.

"No, I don't know. Where are you going?"

"I am going to Havre, to see Chambrelan."

"Who is Chambrelan?"

"The healer, of course."

"What healer?"

"The healer who cured my father."

"Your father?"

"Yes, the healer who cured my father years ago."

"What was the matter with your father?"

"A draught caught him in the back, so that he couldn't move hand or foot."

"Well, what did your friend Chambrelan do to him?"

"He kneaded his back with both hands as though he were making bread! And he was all right in a couple of hours!"

Belhomme thought that Chambrelan must also have used some charm, but he did not dare say so before the priest. Caniveau replied laughing:

"Are you sure it isn't a rabbit that you have in your ear? He might have taken that hole for his home. Wait, I'll make him run away."

Whereupon Caniveau, making a megaphone of his hands, began to mimic the barking of hounds. He snapped, howled, growled, barked. And everybody in the carriage began to roar, even the schoolmaster, who, as a rule, never even smiled.

However, as Belhomme seemed angry at their making fun of him, the priest changed the conversation, and turning to Rabot's big wife, said:

"You have a large family, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur le curé—and it's a pretty hard matter to bring it up!"

Rabot agreed, nodding his head as though to say: "Oh, yes, it's a hard thing to bring up!"

"How many children?"

Her strong and clear voice answered with a tone of authority:

"Sixteen children, Monsieur le curé, fifteen of them from my husband!"

And Rabot smiled broadly, nodding his head. He was responsible for fifteen, he alone, Rabot! His wife said so! Therefore there could be no doubt about it. And he was proud!

And whose was the sixteenth? She didn't tell. It was doubtless the first. Perhaps everybody knew, for no one was surprised. Even Caniveau kept mum.

But Belhomme began to moan again:

"Oh—oh—oh! It's scratching around in the bottom of my ear! Oh, dear, oh, dear!"

The carriage was just stopping before the Café Polyte. The priest said:

"If someone were to pour a little water in your ear, you might perhaps be able to drive it out. Do you want to try?"

"Yes! I am willing."

And everybody got out in order to witness the operation. The priest asked for a bowl, a napkin and a glass of water: then he told the teacher to bend the patient's head and hold it there, and, as soon as the liquid should have entered the canal, to turn his head back again quickly.

But Caniveau, who was already peering into Belhomme's ear to see if he couldn't discover the beast, shouted:

"What a mess! You'll have to clear that out, old man. Your rabbit could never get through that; his feet would stick.

The priest in turn examined the passage and saw that it was too narrow and too congested for him to attempt to expel the animal. It was the teacher who cleared out this passage by means of a match

and a bit of cloth. Then, in the midst of the general excitement, the priest poured into the passage half a glass of water, which trickled over the face through the hair and down the neck of the patient. Then the schoolmaster quickly twisted the head around over the bowl, as though he were trying to unscrew it. A couple of drops dripped into the white receptacle. All the passengers rushed forward. No insect had come out.

However, Belhomme exclaimed: "I don't feel anything any more." The priest triumphantly exclaimed: "Certainly it has been drowned." Everybody was happy and got back into the coach.

But hardly had they started when Belhomme began to cry out again. The bug had aroused itself and had become furious. He even claimed that it had now entered his head and was eating out his brain. He was howling with such contortions that Poiret's wife, thinking him possessed by the devil, began to cry and to cross herself. Then the pain abating a little the sick man began to tell how it was running around in his ear. With his finger he imitated the movements of the body, seeming to see it, to follow it with his eyes: "There it goes up again! Oh—oh—oh—such misery!"

Caniveau was getting impatient. "It's the water that is making the bug angry. It is much more accustomed to wine."

Everybody laughed, and he continued: "When we get to the Café Bourbeux, give it some brandy, and it won't bother you any more, I wager."

But Belhomme could contain himself no longer; he began howling as though his soul were being torn from his body. The priest was obliged to hold his head for him. They asked Césaire Horlaville to stop at the nearest house. It was a farmhouse on the

edge of the road. Belhomme was carried into it and laid on the kitchen table in order to repeat the operation. Caniveau advised mixing brandy and water in order to benumb and perhaps kill the insect. But the priest preferred vinegar.

They poured the liquid in drop by drop this time, that it might penetrate down to the bottom, and they left it several minutes in the organ that the beast had chosen for its home.

A bowl had once more been brought; Belhomme was turned over bodily by the priest and Caniveau, while the schoolmaster was tapping on the healthy ear in order to empty the other.

Césaire Horlaville himself, whip in hand, had come in to observe the proceedings.

Suddenly, at the bottom of the bowl appeared a little brown spot, no bigger than a tiny seed. However, it was moving. It was a flea! First there were cries of astonishment and then shouts of laughter. A flea! Well, that was a good joke, a mighty good one! Caniveau was slapping his thigh, Césaire Horlaville snapped his whip, the priest laughed like a braying donkey, the teacher cackled as though he were sneezing, and the two women were giving little cries of joy, like the clucking of hens.

Belhomme was seated on the table and had taken the bowl between his knees; he was observing, with serious attention and a vengeful anger in his eye, the conquered insect which was twisting around in the water. He grunted, "You wicked little beast!" and he spat on it.

The driver, wild with joy, kept repeating: "A flea, a flea, ah! there you are, damned little flea, damned little flea, damned little flea!" Then having calmed down a little, he cried: "Well, back to the coach! We've lost enough time."

And the passengers, still laughing, went toward the carriage. However, Belhomme, who was the last, declared:

"I am going back to Criquetot. I have nothing more to do in Havre now."

The driver answered: "I don't care, provided you pay for your seat!"

"I only owe you half, since I have been only half way."

"You owe for the whole trip, since you reserved your seat to the end."

And a dispute arose which soon became a furious quarrel. Belhomme swore that he would only give twenty cents, Césaire Horlaville maintained that he must receive forty cents. Their faces close together, they were yelling at each other.

Caniveau got down from the coach:

"First, you owe forty cents to the curé, and then you have to treat everybody, that makes fifty-five, and then you give twenty to Césaire. How's that?"

The driver, greatly pleased at the thought of seeing Belhomme pay out three francs seventy-five, answered: "That suits me!"

"Pay up."

"I won't! First of all, the priest is not a doctor."

"If you don't pay, I will put you back in Césaire's wagon and take you to Havre."

And the giant, seizing Belhomme by the shoulders, lifted him like a child. The latter saw that he would have to give in. He drew out his purse and paid.

Then the coach went once more on its way to Havre, while Belhomme returned to Criquetot, and all the passengers, now quiet, were watching the blue blouse of the peasant as he disappeared down the white road.

# FRIEND JOSEPH

THEY had seen much of each other during the winter in Paris. As is always the case, they had lost sight of each other after leaving school, and had met again when they were old and gray-haired. One of them had married, but the other had remained in single blessedness.

M. de Méroul lived six months in Paris and six months in his little château at Tourbeville. Having married the daughter of a neighboring squire, he had lived a good and peaceful life in the indolence of the man who has nothing to do. Of a calm and quiet disposition, and not over-intelligent, he used to spend his time quietly regretting the past, grieving over the customs and institutions of the day and continually repeating to his wife, who would lift her eyes and sometimes her hands to heaven, as a sign of energetic assent: "Good gracious! What a government!"

Madame de Méroul intellectually resembled her husband as though she had been his sister. She knew, by tradition, that one should above all respect the Pope and the King!

And she loved and respected them from the bottom of her heart, without knowing them, with a poetic fervor, with an hereditary devotion, with the tenderness of a well-born woman. She was good to the marrow of her bones. She had had no children and never ceased mourning the fact.

On seeing, at a dancing party, his old friend, Joseph Mouradour, M. de Méroul felt a deep and simple joy, for in their youth they had been the most intimate of friends.

After the first shouts of surprise caused by the changes which time had wrought in their bodies and countenances, they told each other about their lives since the time they had last met.

Joseph Mouradour, who was from the Midi, had become a government official. His expression was clear and frank; he spoke rapidly, telling his whole mind without discretion. He was a Republican, one of those Republicans who make a free and easy law unto themselves and who claim a freedom of speech which goes as far as brutality.

He came to his friend's house and was immediately loved for his easy cordiality, in spite of his radical ideas. Madame de Méroul would exclaim: "What a shame! Such a charming man!"

Monsieur de Méroul would say to his friend, in a serious and confidential tone of voice: "You have no idea of the harm that you are doing your country." He loved him all the same, for nothing is stronger than the ties of childhood taken up again at a riper age. Joseph Mouradour bantered the wife and the husband, calling them "my amiable snails," and

sometimes he would solemnly declaim against backward people, old prejudices and traditions.

When he was once started on his democratic eloquence, the couple, somewhat ill at ease, would keep silent from politeness and good-breeding; then the husband would try to turn the conversation into some other channel in order to avoid a clash. Joseph Mouradour was only seen in the intimacy of the family.

Summer came. The Mérouls had no greater joy than to receive their friends at their country home at Tourbeville. It was a good, healthy joy, the pleasure of honest people and of country landlords. They would meet their friends at the neighboring railroad station and would bring them back in their carriage, always on the lookout for compliments on the country, on its natural features, on the condition of the roads, on the cleanliness of the farm-houses, on the size of the cattle grazing in the fields, on everything within sight.

They would call attention to the remarkable speed with which their horse trotted, surprising for an animal that did heavy work part of the year before a plow; and they would anxiously await the opinion of the new-comer on their family domain, sensitive to the least word and thankful for the slightest good intention.

Joseph Mouradour was invited, and he announced his arrival.

Husband and wife had come to the train, delighted to welcome him to their home. As soon as he saw them, Joseph Mouradour jumped from the train with a briskness which increased their satisfaction. He shook their hands, congratulated them, overwhelmed them with compliments.

All the way home he was charming, remarking

on the height of the trees, the goodness of the crops and the speed of the horse.

When he stepped on the porch of the house, Monsieur de Méroul said, with a certain friendly solemnity:

"You are as in your own home now."

Joseph Mouradour answered:

"Thanks, my friend; I was hoping so. Anyhow, I never stand on ceremony with my friends. That's how I understand hospitality."

Then he went upstairs, as he said, to dress as a farmer, and he came back all togged out in blue, with a little straw hat and yellow shoes, a regular Parisian dressed for an outing. He also seemed to become more vulgar, more jovial, more familiar, having put on with his country clothes a free and easy manner which he judged suitable for the occasion. His new manners shocked Monsieur and Madame de Méroul a little, for they always remained serious and dignified, even in the country, as though compelled by the two letters preceding their name to keep up a certain formality even in the closest intimacy.

After luncheon they all went out to visit the farms, and the Parisian astounded the respectful peasants by his tone of comradeship.

In the evening the priest came for dinner, an old, fat priest, accustomed to dining there on Sundays, but who had been especially invited this day in honor of the new guest.

Joseph, on seeing him, made a wry face. Then he observed him with surprise, as though he were a creature of some peculiar race, which he had never been able to observe at close quarters. During the meal he told some rather free stories, allowable in the intimacy of the family, but which seemed to the

Mérouls a little out of place in the presence of a minister of the Church. He did not say, "Monsieur l'abbé," but simply, "Monsieur." He embarrassed the priest greatly by philosophical discussions about diverse superstitions established over the world. He said: "Your God, Monsieur, is of those who should be respected, but also one of those who should be discussed. Mine is called Reason; he has always been the enemy of yours."

The Mérouls, distressed, tried to turn the trend of the conversation. The priest left very early.

Then the husband said, very quietly:

"Perhaps you went a little bit too far with the priest."

But Joseph immediately exclaimed:

"Well, that's pretty good! I should put myself out for a shaveling! And say, you will do me the pleasure of not imposing him on me during any more meals. You can both make use of him as much as you wish, but don't serve him up to your friends, hang it!"

"But, my friend, think of his holy——"

Joseph Mouradour interrupted him:

"Yes, I know; they have to be treated like delicate roses! But let them respect my convictions and I will respect theirs!"

That was all for that day.

As soon as Madame de Méroul entered the parlor, the next morning, she noticed in the middle of the table three newspapers which made her start: the *Voltaire,* the *République-Française* and the *Justice.* Immediately Joseph Mouradour, still in blue, appeared on the threshold, attentively reading the *Intransigeant.* He cried:

"There's a great article by Rochefort. That fellow is a wonder!"

He read it out loud to himself, emphasizing the parts which especially pleased him, so carried away by enthusiasm that he did not notice his friend's entrance. Monsieur de Méroul was holding in his hand the *Gaulois* for himself, the *Clairon* for his wife.

The fiery prose of the master writer who overthrew the empire, spouted with violence, sung in the southern accent, rang throughout the peaceful parlors and seemed to spatter the walls and century-old furniture with a hail of bold, ironical and warlike words.

The man and the woman, one standing, the other sitting, were listening with astonishment, so shocked that they could not move.

In a burst of eloquence Mouradour finished the last paragraph, then exclaimed triumphantly:

"I guess that's pretty good!"

Then suddenly he noticed the two sheets which his friend was carrying, and he in turn stood speechless from surprise. Then quickly walking toward him he demanded angrily:

"What are you doing with those papers?"

Monsieur de Méroul answered hesitatingly:

"But—those—those are my papers!"

"Your papers! What are you doing—making fun of me? You will do me the pleasure of reading mine; they will limber up your ideas, and as for yours—there! that's what I do with them."

And before his astonished host could stop him, he had seized the two newspapers and thrown them out of the window. Then he solemnly handed the *Justice* to Madame de Méroul, the *Voltaire* to her husband, while he sank down into an arm-chair to finish reading the *Intransigeant*.

The couple, through delicacy, made a pretense

of reading a little, then they returned the Republican sheets, which they handled gingerly, as though they might be poisoned.

Then he laughed and declared:

"One week of this régime and I will have you converted to my ideas."

In truth, at the end of a week he governed the house. He had closed the door against the priest, whom Madame de Méroul had to visit secretly; he had ruled against the admission of the *Gaulois* and of the *Clairon* into the house, so that a servant used to go mysteriously to the post-office to get them, and as soon as he entered they would be hidden under the cushions of the sofa; he arranged everything to suit himself—always charming, always good-natured, a jovial and all-powerful tyrant.

Other friends were expected, pious and conservative friends. The unhappy couple saw the impossibility of having them there then, and, not knowing what to do, one evening they announced to Joseph Mouradour that they would be obliged to absent themselves for a few days, on business, and they begged him to stay on alone. He did not get excited, and answered:

"Very well, I don't mind! I will wait here as long as you wish. I have already said that there should be no formality between friends. You are perfectly right—go ahead and attend to your business. It will not offend me in the least; quite the contrary, it will make me feel much more completely one of the family. Go ahead, my friends, I will wait for you!"

Monsieur and Madame de Méroul left the following day.

He is still waiting for them.

# THE ASSASSIN

THE prisoner was being defended by a very young lawyer, a beginner, who spoke as follows:

"Gentlemen of the jury, the facts are undeniable. My client, an honest man, a model employée, mild and timid, murdered his employer in a fit of anger which seems to me incomprehensible. May I be permitted to give the psychology of this crime, if I may so speak, without changing anything, without excusing anything? You may give your judgment afterward.

"Jean Nicolas Lougère is the son of very honorable parents, who have made of him a simple and respectful man.

"Yes, that is his crime—respect! It is a sentiment, gentlemen, which we no longer know nowadays; the name only lives, and seems to have lost all signification. One must go into certain old-fashioned families in order to find this severe tradition, this religion of things or of man, of sentiment or of faith, clad in sacred garments, this faith which will stand neither doubt nor smiles, nor the faintest kind of a suspicion.

"A man cannot be honest, in the full force of the

word, unless he is respectful. The man who respects has his eyes closed. He believes. We, whose eyes are wide open upon the world, who live here in this court-house, which is the sewer of society, we, who are the confidants of shame, the devoted defenders of all the rascality of humanity, we, who receive with indulgence, with smiling good-will all the guilty ones in order to defend them before you, we, who really love our profession, we measure our sympathy by the size of the fee, we cannot have a respectful soul. We see too often this stream of corruption which extends from the heads of the government down to the last of the knaves, we know too well how everything happens, how everything is given, how everything is sold. Positions, functions, honors, brutally exchanged for a little gold, cleverly manipulated in exchange for titles, or bartered for a woman's kiss. Our duty and our profession compel us to ignore nothing, to suspect everybody, for everyone is suspicious; and, when we find ourselves face to face with a man, such as the murderer seated before you, who has the religion of respect firmly enough instilled in him to become a martyr to it, we are dumfounded.

" People of our class, gentlemen, are honorable just as we are cleanly, through a disgust for baseness and through a sentiment of personal dignity and pride; but we do not carry in the bottom of our hearts the blind, innate, brutal faith as does this man.

" Let me tell you the history of his life.

" He was brought up as children were formerly, dividing the actions of men into two parts: the good and the bad. The good was shown him with an irresistible authority, which made him distinguish it from evil as one distinguishes day from night. His

father did not belong to the race of superior minds which, looking down from above, see the sources of faith and recognize the social necessities from which these distinctions arose.

" He grew up, therefore, religious and confident, enthusiastic but narrow-minded.

" When he was twenty-two years old he married a cousin of his, brought up as he had been, simple and pure as he was. He had the inestimable good-fortune to have as life partner an honest woman with a good heart, that is to say, the thing which is rarest and most worthy in the whole world. He had for his mother the veneration which surrounds the mothers of patriarchal families, this profound belief which is reserved for divinities. He transferred to his wife a little of this religion, hardly modified at all by marital familiarity. He lived in absolute ignorance of duplicity, in a state of obstinate rectitude and of quiet bliss which made him a being by himself. Deceiving no one, he could imagine no one's deceiving him.

" Shortly before his marriage he entered the employ of Monsieur Langlais, recently murdered by him, as cashier.

" Gentlemen of the jury, we know by the testimony of Madame Langlais and her brother, Monsieur Perthuis, her husband's partner, of all the family and of all the higher employees of this bank that Lougère was a model of honesty, submission, mildness, promptness and of deference to his superiors.

" He was, therefore, treated with the consideration due to his exemplary conduct. He was accustomed to this homage and to a kind of veneration shown to Madame Lougère, whose praise was on everybody's lips.

" She died in a few days of typhoid fever.

" He certainly felt deep sorrow, but it was the cold and calm sorrow of a methodical heart. One could only notice by his pallor and by his changed appearance to what extent he had been wounded.

" Then, gentlemen, a very natural thing happened.

" This man had been married for ten years. For ten years he had been accustomed to having a woman near him all the time. He was used to her caress, to her familiar voice when he returned home, to her greetings morning and night; in short, to all the little things which make woman so dear, so indispensable to man. He was perhaps also accustomed to the little material delicacies of the table and to all the attentions which we do not feel, but which, little by little, become necessary to our comfort. He could no longer live alone. Then, in order to while away his interminable evenings, he took the habit of sittings for an hour or so, in a neighboring café. He would drink a bock and sit there motionless, absent-mindedly watching the billiard-balls chasing each other over the green table, listening to the disputes of the players, the discussions of his neighbors on political questions and the bursts of laughter which often followed a rough joke from the other end of the room. He often ended by falling asleep from fatigue and weariness. But at the bottom of his heart he felt the irresistible need for a woman; and every evening, without noticing it, he came a little nearer to the desk where the cashier reigned, a little blonde, unconsciously drawn to her because she was a woman.

" Soon they began to talk, and he got into the habit of spending all his evenings beside her. She was gracious and thoughtful, as becomes one in business, and she amused herself by keeping his glass

well filled, which was very good for the business. But every day Lougère became more and more attached to this woman whom he did not know, whose whole history he ignored, and whom he loved solely because he saw no other.

" The woman, who was very sly, soon noticed that this man could be very useful to her. Assuredly, the cleverest plan would be to get him to marry her.

" She succeeded without the least difficulty.

" Need I add, gentlemen of the jury, that the conduct of this woman was most shameless, and that marriage, far from putting a stop to it, only made her the more brazen? She seemed to take a special pleasure in deceiving this honest man with all the employés of his office. I say, with all. We have the letters, gentlemen. It was soon a public scandal, and the husband alone, as is always the case, was the only one in ignorance.

" Finally this wretch, with a purpose which is easy to conceive, even led astray the young nineteen-year-old son of her husband's employer, on whose mind and senses she soon had a nefarious influence. Monsieur Langlais, who until then had shut his eyes through kindness and friendship for his subaltern, on seeing his son in the hands, I should say in the arms, of this dangerous creature, felt a very legitimate anger.

" He made a mistake, immediately calling Lougère and speaking to him, on the spot, of his paternal indignation.

" Nothing remains for me now, gentlemen, but to read you the story of the crime, gathered as evidence from the lips of the dying man himself:

" ' I had just learned that my son had given ten thousand francs to this woman, and my anger was

stronger than my reason. I certainly never doubted the honesty of Lougère, but a certain blindness is more dangerous than a vice.

" ' I therefore had him called up to me, and told him that I found myself obliged to deprive myself of his services.

" ' He stood before me dazed, not understanding. He finished by asking for an explanation with a certain show of anger.

" ' I refused to give him any, claiming that my reasons were too personal. He then thought that I suspected him of embezzlement, and, very pale, he told me to explain myself. Started on this idea, he was very strong, and assumed the right to talk very loud.

" ' Then, as I still kept quiet, he began to insult me, and he soon reached such a point that I was afraid of violence.

" ' Suddenly, one stinging word caught me, and I threw the truth in his teeth.

" ' He remained standing for several seconds, looking at me with a haggard expression; then I saw him snatch from my desk the long scissors which I used for cutting out the pages of certain ledgers, and I saw him fall upon me with uplifted arm, then I felt something under my throat, right above my chest, without feeling the slightest pain.'

" There, gentlemen of the jury, is the simple story of this murder. What more can be said in its defense? He respected his second wife blindly because he had respected his first one with reason."

After a short deliberation, the jury rendered a verdict of acquittal.

## SOLITUDE

OUR dinner, a gay, stag affair, was just over. One of my old friends said to me:

"Let us walk up the Champs-Élysées!"

We started off, sauntering along under the budding trees. All was quiet, except for the low continuous rumble so characteristic of Paris. A light breeze was fanning our faces, and thousands of stars dotted the dark sky like a golden dust.

My companion said:

"I don't know why, but I breathe better here, at night, than in any other place. My mind seems to broaden out. At times, just for a second, it seems to me as though the divine secret of life were about to be discovered. Then the light goes out, and all is over!"

From time to time we could see two forms softly slip by us along the bordering hedge. We were passing in front of a bench, where a couple were seated side by side, making a dark spot.

My friend murmured:

" Poor people! It is not disgust but an immense pity which I feel for them. Of all the mysteries of human life, there is one which I have thoroughly investigated: our great misery comes from being alone, and all our efforts and all our acts only tend to escape this solitude. Those two lovers on the bench, in the open air, are trying, like all living creatures, to put at least a temporary stop to their loneliness; but they are, and always shall be, alone, just as you and I.

" One notices it more or less, that's all.

" For some time I have been suffering the abominable torture of having understood, of having discovered, the awful isolation in which I live, and I know that nothing can stop it—nothing, you understand!

" Whatever we attempt or do, whatever may be the impulse of our hearts, the cry of our lips, the clasp of our arms, we are always alone!

" I drag you out for this walk to-night, in order not to return home, because I am suffering terribly at present from the loneliness of my house. What good will it do me? I am speaking to you, you are listening to me, and we are both of us alone—side by side, but alone. Do you understand me?

" Happy are the simple-minded, say the Scriptures. They have the illusion of happiness. They do not feel the same lonely misery that we do; they do not, as I do, wander through life without any other than superficial contact, without any other joy than the selfish satisfaction of understanding, of seeing, and of suffering endlessly from the knowledge of our eternal isolation.

" You think I am crazy, don't you?

" Listen. For a year I have felt the loneliness of my life, each day I seemed to be sinking deeper

and deeper into a dark pit whose edges I cannot find, whose bottom I cannot touch. I am in there alone, with nobody near me, no living creature taking the same gloomy journey. This pit is Life. At times I seem to hear noises, voices, cries—groping my way, I slowly move toward this confused disturbance. But I never find it, I never meet anyone, I never find another hand stretched out in the surrounding darkness. Do you understand?

" Some men have, at times, realized this solitude.

" Musset cried:

> " ' Who comes? Who calls me? No one!
> I am alone.—The hour has come.
> What loneliness! What wretchedness!'

" But with him it was only a passing doubt, and not a definite certitude as it is with me. He was a poet; his life was full of fantastic dreams. He was never truly alone. I am!

" Gustave Flaubert, who was one of the great sufferers of this world, because he was a clear thinker, wrote these hopeless words to a friend: ' We are all of us in a desert. No one understands anyone else.'

" True, no one understands anyone else, whatever he may think, say, or attempt. Does the earth know what is happening in the stars, which are scattered through space like sparks, some of them so distant that all we can do is dimly to perceive their light, others so far off that they are lost in the infinite, and yet they may be as close together as the molecules of a body?

" Well, man knows no more about his neighbor. We are as far away from one another as these stars, more isolated, especially because thought is unfathomable.

" Do you know anything more terrible than constant intercourse with people whom we will never be able to understand? We love one another as though we were chained right near together, with arms outstretched, but unable to approach any closer. We are constantly tortured by the desire to come nearer to one another, but our efforts remain unavailing, our anger vain, our confidences fruitless, our embraces without power, our caresses without hope. When we wish to mingle, our rushing toward one another only makes us bump together.

" I never feel more alone than when I am opening my heart to some friend, because then I understand better the impassable barrier which exists between us. He is there, I see his eyes looking into mine, but the soul which is behind—that I can never know. He is listening to me. What does he think? Yes, what does he think? Do you understand this torment? Perhaps he hates me, or despises me; perhaps he is laughing at me. He thinks over what I tell him, judges me, scoffs at me, calls me a fool. How can I find out what he thinks? How can I find out whether he loves me as I love him, and what is happening in that little round head? What a dark mystery is this, the unknown thought of a creature, hidden and free! We can never know it, guide it, command it, nor conquer it!

" I have tried my level best to open all the doors of my soul, to make myself understood. Yet away down in the bottom there is the secret which nobody can fathom. Nobody can discover it, understand it, because nobody resembles me, because no one understands anyone else.

" Do you understand me yourself, at this moment? No, you think I am mad! You are examining me, you are wary of me! You say to yourself:

'What is the matter with him to-night?' But if, sometime in the future, you should manage to grasp my horrible and subtle suffering, just come to me and say: '*I have understood you!*' and you may make me happy for a second.

"It is women who best make me understand my solitude. How they have made me suffer, because they, more than men, have given me the illusion of not being alone!

"When in love, man seems to broaden out. A superhuman happiness fills his soul! Do you know why? Do you know whence comes this feeling of great joy? It is solely because we imagine ourselves no longer alone. The isolation, the great loneliness appears to cease. What a mistake!

"You know those delightful hours spent face to face with this creature with long hair and delicate features, and whose glance maddens us. What folly takes hold of our minds! What illusion carries us away!

"It seems as though, in a few minutes, she and I would be one! But this time never comes, and after weeks of waiting, of hoping and of deceitful joy, I suddenly find myself even more lonely than ever before. After each kiss, after each embrace, the gulf widens. It is tantalizing, terrible!

"Then, farewell, all is over! You hardly recognize this woman who has been so much to you during a period of your life, and whose thoughts you have never known! At the very time when it seems that, through some mysterious accord, each had descended into the very depth of the other's soul, one little word shows us our error, shows us, like a flash of lightning in the dark night, the black abyss between us.

"And yet, perhaps the most delightful thing in the world is to spend an evening with a beloved

woman, without talking, completely happy by the sole sensation of her presence. Let us not ask more, for two creatures never mingle completely.

" As for me, now, I have closed my soul. I no longer tell anyone what I think, what I believe and what I love. Knowing myself condemned to this appalling loneliness, I observe things, without ever giving my opinion. What do I care for opinions, pleasures, creeds! Not being able to share anything with anyone, I have lost interest in everything. My hidden thoughts remain an eternal secret. I have commonplace answers for every-day questions, and a smile which says ' yes,' when I do not even wish to take the trouble to answer.

" Do you understand me? "

We had gone up the long avenue to the Arc de Triomphe, and back again to the Place de la Concorde, for he had said all this very slowly, adding many details which I cannot remember at present.

He stopped, and, suddenly stretching his arm towards the great granite obelisk, standing like a sentinel in the center of Paris, this exiled monument, bearing on its sides the history of its country written in strange characters, he cried:

" There! We are all like that! "

Then he left me without another word.

Was he intoxicated, crazy or very wise? I have not yet found out. At times it seems to me that he was right, and then, again, I think he must have lost his mind.

## GRAVEYARD SIRENS

THE five friends had finished their dinner; they were middle-aged men of the world, rich, three of them married, the other two bachelors. They met thus every month, in memory of their youth, and, after dinner, they chatted away until early in the morning. Friends since early youth, they enjoyed being together, and these were perhaps the pleasantest evenings of their lives. They would talk about everything which interests and amuses Parisians; their conversation was, for the most part, a recapitulation of the news obtained from the daily newspapers.

One of the gayest was Joseph de Bardon, a bachelor who lived and enjoyed Parisian life to its fullest. He was neither a reveler nor a degenerate, but he was curious and still enjoyed the vigor of youth, for he had not yet reached two-score

years. A man of the world in the broadest and best sense of the word, gifted with great wit without depth, with a varied knowledge without real learning, with a quick perception without serious insight, he drew from his observations, from his adventures, from everything which he saw, met and found, comic and philosophic anecdotes and witty remarks which gave him throughout the town a reputation of intelligence.

He was the orator of the evening. Each time he had his story, on which they counted. He began to tell it without even being asked.

Smoking, his elbows resting on the table, half a glass of brandy resting before his plate, in the smoky atmosphere filled with the aroma of coffee, he seemed completely at ease, just as some beings seem absolutely at home in certain places and at certain times, as, for instance, a nun in a chapel, or a goldfish in a bowl.

Slowly exhaling the fragrant smoke of his after-dinner cigar, he said:

" A rather peculiar adventure happened to me a short while ago."

In one voice, they all exclaimed:

" Tell us about it."

He continued:

" With pleasure. You know that I have a habit of walking around Paris, like book collectors in search of rare editions. I take notice of what occurs, of the people, of all who pass, and of everything which happens.

" Well, one afternoon, toward the middle of September, when the weather was at its best, I left home, without caring in which direction I went. We always feel a vague desire to call on some pretty woman. We run over our mental index of acquaintances,

weigh the interest and charm with which they inspire us, and decide according to the favorite of the day. But when the sun is beautiful and the air is warm, we often lose all desire for visits.

" The sun was beautiful and the air was warm; I lighted a cigar and I strolled along aimlessly in the direction of the Outer Boulevard. Then, as I was wandering along, the idea came to me to go as far as the Montmartre Cemetery.

" I like cemeteries; they rest me and make me sad. And then, there are so many good friends in there, whom we shall never see again; I always go there from time to time.

" It happens that in this Montmartre Cemetery I have a sweetheart, a charming little woman whom I really loved and the memory of whom makes me sad and gives me regrets—regrets of every kind. I go and dream over her last resting-place—all is over for her.

" And then, I like cemeteries because they are enormous cities with a great population. Just think of the number of bodies that lie in this little enclosure, of the generations of Parisians who will live there forever, closed up in their little vaults, or buried under the earth with a stone placed at their heads to identify their last home, while the living ones take up so much room and make so much noise.

" And in the cemeteries there are monuments which are almost as interesting as those which are to be found in museums. Although it cannot be compared to it, the tomb of Cavaignac reminded me, I must admit, of that masterpiece of Jean Goujon: the body of Louis de Brézé, in the underground chapel of the Cathedral of Rouen; all, so called, modern and realistic art has come from there, gentlemen. This dead Louis de Brézé is more real, more terrible, more

convulsed by agony than all the statuary which is put on all the tombs to-day.

"But in the cemetery of Montmartre one can still admire the monument of Baudin, which has a certain amount of grandeur, that of Gautier, that of Murger, where, the other day, I saw one solitary wreath, put there by whom? By his last sweetheart, now old and perhaps a janitress in the neighborhood? It is a pretty little statue by Millet, but which neglect and dirt are spoiling. Sing of Youth, oh, Murger!

"Well, I entered the cemetery of Montmartre, and was overcome by a grief which was not very disagreeable, the kind which, when you feel well, makes you think: 'This place is none too gay, but, thank goodness, my time has not yet come!'

"The impression of autumn, of that moist warmth, which smells of dead leaves, and the weak, tired, lifeless sun enhanced the poetry of the sensation of solitude which hangs over this last resting-place of man.

"I sauntered along slowly through these streets of tombs, where neighbors do not gossip, do not quarrel and do not read the papers. I began to read the epitaphs. Really, that's the funniest thing in the world. Never could Labiche or Meilhac make me laugh as does the comical prose on the tombstones. For random reading, those marble slabs and those crosses, where relatives of the dead have poured out their grief, their wishes for the future happiness of the deceased and their hopes to join them, are far superior to Paul de Kock.

"But the spot which I love, in this cemetery, is the abandoned section, solitary, full of large yew and cypress trees, the old quarter of ancient dead which will soon become a new quarter, whose great

green trees, nourished by human bodies, will be cut down in order to lay out new corpses under little marble slabs.

" When I had wandered around there for a while, I saw that I was going to find it dull and that I would have to bring to the last resting-place of my little friend my sincere tribute to her memory. On arriving near her, I felt quite sad. Poor darling, she was so gentle, so loving, so white and fresh—and now—if that place were to be opened——

" Bending over the iron railing, I whispered my troubles to her, which she doubtless did not hear, and I was just about to leave when I saw a woman in black, in deep mourning, who was kneeling at the neighboring plot. Her crape veil had been lifted and showed a pretty blonde head, whose golden tresses under the dark headgear seemed tinged with the first light of dawn. I stood there.

" Suddenly she seemed to be suffering from a deep grief. She had buried her face in her hands, and, as rigid as a statue, lost in her regrets, telling over her rosary, she seemed herself a dead woman thinking of the deceased. Then, suddenly, I guessed that she was going to cry—I guessed it by a little movement of her back like a shiver. At first she wept silently, then stronger and stronger, with a rapid twitching of neck and shoulders. Suddenly she uncovered her eyes. They were full of tears and charming, wild eyes which looked around as though awakening from a nightmare. She saw me looking at her, seemed ashamed and once more hid her face in her hands. Then her sobs became convulsive, and her head slowly drooped toward the marble. She leaned her forehead against it, and the folds of her veil, spreading around her, covered the white angles of the beloved monument like a new wreath of

mourning. I heard her moan, then she sank down, her cheek against the slab, and remained motionless, unconscious.

" Instinctively I started toward her, I slapped the palms of her hands, blew on her eyes, and, at the same time, read this simple epitaph: 'Here lies Louis Théodore Carrel, captain of marines, killed by the enemy in Tonkin. Pray for him.'

" This death was only a few months old. I was moved to tears, and I redoubled my cares. They were successful; she regained consciousness. I seemed very sad. I understood from her first look that she would be polite and grateful. She was; and with more tears, her story came out by fragments: the death of the officer in Tonkin at the end of a year of married life, after a love match, for, having neither father nor mother, she only had the regulation dowry.

" I consoled, comforted and lifted her to her feet. Then I said to her:

" ' Do not stay here. Come.'

" She murmured:

" ' I feel unable to walk.'

" ' I will support you.'

" ' Thank you, sir, you are very kind. Were you also mourning for a deceased one? '

" ' Yes, Madame.'

" ' A woman? '

" ' Yes, Madame.'

" ' Your wife? '

" ' A friend.'

" ' One can love a friend as much as a wife. Passion knows no law.'

" ' Yes, Madame.'

" She took my arm, and we started off together. I almost carried her through the walks of the ceme-

tery. When we were outside, she murmured in a weak voice:

"'I am feeling very faint.'

"'Would you like to go some place and take something?'

"'Yes, Monsieur.'

"I noticed a restaurant, one of those places where the friends of the dead go to recuperate from their exertions. We went inside. I ordered for her a cup of hot tea, which seemed to revive her. A vague smile appeared on her lips. She spoke to me of herself. It was so sad, so lonesome being all alone at home, day and night, having no one to love or confide in, no intimacy with anyone.

"She looked sincere. The words sounded so sweet from her mouth. I grew tender. She was very young, perhaps twenty. I paid her some compliments, which she accepted very well. Then, as the time was passing, I offered to take her home in a cab. She accepted; and in the carriage we sat so close to each other, shoulder to shoulder, that the warmth of our bodies mingled through our clothes, which is one of the most distracting things in the world.

"When the carriage had stopped at her house, she murmured: 'I really feel unable to go upstairs alone, for I live on the fourth floor. You have already been so kind, would you mind giving me your arm up to my apartment?'

"I hastened to accept. She went up slowly, breathing with difficulty. Then, at her door, she added:

"'Wouldn't you like to step inside for a minute, in order that I may thank you?'

"Of course I accepted.

"The apartment was very modest, even a little poor, but simply and tastefully arranged.

" We sat down side by side on a little sofa, and she once more spoke to me of her loneliness.

" She rang for the servant, in order to offer me something to drink. The girl did not come. I was delighted, hoping that this maid might be one of those women who only come in the morning to clear up and then leave.

" She had taken off her hat. She was really charming with her bright eyes fastened on me, so charming that I had a terrible temptation, and I yielded to it. I seized her in my arms, and on her eyes, which suddenly closed, I rained kisses—kisses —kisses.

" She fought and pushed me away, repeating:

" ' Stop—stop—end it! '

" What could she mean by this word? In such cases ' end ' can have at least two meanings. In order to quiet her, I passed from her eyes to her mouth, and I imparted to the word ' end ' the meaning which I preferred. She did not resist too much, and when we once more looked at each other, after this outrage to the memory of the captain killed in Tonkin, she had a languishing, tender, resigned look which dispelled all my fears.

" Then I was gallant, eager and thankful. And after another conversation, which lasted about an hour, I asked her:

" ' Where do you dine? '

" ' In a little restaurant in the neighborhood.'

" ' All alone? '

" ' Yes, of course.'

" ' Will you dine with me? '

" ' Where? '

" ' In a good restaurant along the Boulevard.'

" She resisted a little. I insisted. She gave in, calming herself with the following argument: ' I am

so terribly, terribly lonely;' then she added: 'But I must put on a less gloomy dress.'

"She went into her bedroom.

"When she came out again, she was wearing a delightful, gray, second-mourning costume, neat and simple. She evidently had cemetery and street dresses.

"The dinner was most pleasant. She drank champagne, grew bright and lively, and I went home with her.

"This friendship, started on the graves, lasted for about three weeks. But one tires of everything and especially of women. I left her on the pretext of an indispensable journey. I was very generous at my departure and she thanked me warmly. She made me promise, swear, to come back after my return, for she seemed really to care for me.

"I went in search of new love, and about a month went by without my feeling any desire to visit this little graveyard sweetheart. However, I did not forget her. Her memory haunted me like a mystery, like a psychological problem, like one of those inexplicable questions the solution of which worries us.

"I don't know why, but one day I imagined that I might see her in the Montmartre Cemetery, and I went there.

"For a long time I walked around without meeting any others than the ordinary visitors, those who have not yet severed all bonds with their dead.

"But, as I wandered away in another section of this great city of the dead, I noticed suddenly, at the end of a narrow walk a couple in deep mourning approaching in my direction. Oh, astonishment! When they had come up to me, I recognized the woman. It was she!

"She saw me, blushed, and, as I passed beside

her, she gave me an imperceptible wink which seemed to mean: ' Do not recognize me,' but which also meant: ' Come back to see, darling.'

" The man was distinguished-looking, stylish, an officer of the Legion of Honor, about fifty years of age.

" He was supporting her as I myself had done, under similar conditions.

" I left bewildered, wondering at what I had just seen. To what race might this sepulchral huntress belong? Was she an ordinary common girl who went to pluck from the graves sad men, haunted by the memories of their wives or sweethearts, and still upset by the remembrance of vanished caresses? Was she alone? Are there many? Is it a profession? Do they walk the cemetery the same as they do the streets? Graveyard sirens! Or had she alone had this admirable idea, from a deep philosophy, of taking advantage of the regrets of love which these funereal places inspire?

" I would have given much to know whose widow she was that day! "

# CHECKMATE

I WAS going to Turin by way of Corsica. At Nice I took the boat for Bastia, and as soon as we were started I noticed a rather pretty, modest-looking young woman seated on the deck. She was looking away into the distance with a far-away expression in her eyes.

I seated myself opposite her and looked at her, asking myself the questions which come to one's mind on seeing an unknown woman who interests you: What was her condition, her age, her disposition? Then through what you see you guess what you do not know. With your eyes you notice the length of the bust when she is seated, you try to discover her ankle, you observe the quality of the hand and the ear, which indicates origin better than a birth certificate. You try to hear her speak in order to penetrate the nature of her mind and the tendencies of her heart through the intonations of her voice. For the quality of the voice and the choice of words unfold to an experienced observer the whole mysterious texture of the soul.

I was therefore attentively observing my neighbor, looking for signs, analyzing gestures, expecting a revelation at every minute.

She opened a little bag and drew out a news-

paper. I rubbed my hands: "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you think."

She began to read with a look of pleasure and of relish. The title of the sheet was the *Echo de Paris*. I was perplexed. She was reading an article by Scholl. Was she a Schollist? She began to smile. Was she one of his opponents? It was difficult to make her out.

I sat down beside her and began to read, with no less attention, a volume of poetry which I had bought before leaving, the "Song of Love," by Felix Frank.

I noticed that she took in the title with a rapid glance, just as a flying bird snatches up a fly. Several of the passengers passed by in order to look at her. But she seemed only to be thinking of her article. When she had finished it, she laid the paper down between us.

Bowing, I said to her.

"Madame, may I glance at this paper?"

"Certainly, sir."

"In the meanwhile, allow me to offer you this volume of verse."

"Thank you, sir; is it amusing?"

I was a bit disturbed by this question. One does not ask of a volume of verse whether it is amusing. I answered:

"It is better than that, it is charming, delicate and very artistic."

"Then let me see it."

She took the volume, opened it and began to glance through it with a little surprised air which showed that she was not in the habit of reading verse.

At times she seemed moved, at other times she smiled, but with a smile different from the one she had when reading the newspaper.

Suddenly I asked her: " Does it please you? "

" Yes, but I like things that are merry, very merry. I am not at all sentimental."

We began to talk. I found out that she was the wife of a captain of dragoons, stationed at Ajaccio, and that she was going to join her husband.

In a few minutes I had found out that she did not love him any too much. She loved him, nevertheless, but reservedly, as one loves a man who has not lived up to what was expected before marriage. He had trotted her from garrison to garrison, through a lot of sad little villages. Now he was calling her to this dismal island. No, life was not amusing for everybody. She would even have preferred remaining with her parents in Lyons, for there she knew everybody. But now she had to go to Corsica. Really, the Secretary of War was not at all nice to her husband.

We spoke of the places in which she would have preferred to live, and I asked:

" Do you like Paris? "

She exclaimed:

" Oh! Monsieur, do I love Paris? Is it possible to ask such a question? " And she began to talk to me of Paris with such ardor, such enthusiasm, such envy, that I thought to myself: " That's the string to play on."

She adored Paris from a distance with the exasperated passion of a woman from the country, with the wild impatience of a captive bird which is watching a forest all day from the window in which his cage is hung.

She began to question me hurriedly; she wished to learn everything in five minutes. She knew the names of all the well-known people, and of many others of whom I had never heard.

"How is Gounod? and Sardou? Oh! Monsieur, I do so love Sardou's plays! They are so gay and witty! Each time I see one of them I dream of it for a week! I also read one of Daudet's books, which pleased me so much! *Sapho,* do you know it? Is Daudet handsome? Have you seen Daudet? And Zola, what kind of a man is he? If you knew how *Germinal* made me cry! Do you remember where the little child dies in the darkness? Isn't it terrible! I was almost sick after reading it! I also read a book by Monsieur Bourget, *Cruelle Enigme.* I have a girl cousin who went so wild about that novel that she wrote to Bourget. I found that book too poetic. I prefer funny things. Do you know Monsieur Grévin? And Monsieur Coquelin? And Monsieur Damala? And Monsieur Rochefort? They say he is so witty! And Monsieur de Cassagnac? I heard that he has a duel every day!"

After about an hour, this rapid-fire questioning began to slow down; and having satisfied her curiosity to the full extent of my fantastical imagination, I was at liberty to pick my own subjects of conversation.

I told her stories of the gay Parisian life. She drank them in with both eyes and ears. She must certainly have conceived a strange idea of the great, well-known ladies of Paris. They were all stories of clandestine appointments, rapid victories and passionate defeats. From time to time she would ask me:

"Oh! is that the way they live?"

I answered with a sly smile:

"Of course, the average middle-class families lead an uneventful, monotonous life, respecting a virtue which no one appreciates."

I began ironically to philosophize about virtue. I talked carelessly of the poor fools who go through life without ever having known the good, sweet things, without ever having tasted the delicious pleasures of stolen kisses, so passionate and fervid, because they have married some stick of a husband whose marital modesty has allowed them to spend their lives in total ignorance of refined sensuousness and of delicate sentiment.

Then I began to tell her anecdotes, stories of little private dinners, of intrigues which I claimed were known the world over. The refrain was always the same, it was always discreet, veiled praise of sudden and hidden love, of the sensation stolen like a fruit, while passing by, and forgotten as soon as it is over.

Night came on, calm and warm. The great vessel, trembling under the impulse of its massive machinery, was gliding over the seas, under the immense star-studded sky.

The little woman was silent. She was breathing slowly and sometimes sighing. Suddenly she arose:

"I am going to bed," she said; "good night, Monsieur."

She shook hands with me.

I knew that she expected to take, the next evening, the coach which goes from Bastia to Ajaccio through the mountains, and which stays over night on the way.

I answered:

"Good night, Madame."

I then went to my cabin.

The next morning early I reserved all three seats in the coach for myself, alone.

At nightfall, as I was climbing into the old wagon which was about to leave Bastia, the driver asked me

if I would be willing to give up a little room to a lady. I asked gruffly:

"To what lady?"

"To an officer's wife who is going to Ajaccio."

"Tell this person that I will willingly give her a seat."

She arrived, having spent the day sleeping, as she said. She excused herself, thanked me and climbed in.

This wagon was a kind of hermetically sealed box, getting no light except through its two doors. There we were, face to face in the interior. The horses were going at a lively trot; then we got into the mountains. A fresh and penetrating odor of aromatic herbs drifted in through the open windows, that strong smell which Corsica spreads around itself so far that the sailors can recognize it on the sea, so subtle that it is hard to analyze it. I started once more to speak of Paris, and she listened to me again with feverish attention. My stories became bolder and full of those veiled words which stir the blood.

Night had fallen completely. I could no longer see anything, not even the white spot which, a minute ago, the young woman's face made in the darkness. Alone, the driver's lantern lighted the four horses, which were slowly climbing.

From time to time the rumbling noise of a mountain torrent, rushing through the rocks, came to us mingled with the noise of the bells on the horses, then it was soon lost in the distance behind us.

Slowly I advanced my foot and met hers, which she did not remove. Then I no longer moved, and suddenly I began to talk of tenderness and of affection. I had advanced my hand and met hers. She did not remove that either. I kept on talking, nearer

to her ear, very close to her mouth. I already felt her heart beating against my breast. It was beating fast and strong—good sign; then, slowly, I placed my lips on her neck, sure that I held her, so sure that I would have staked my life on it.

But suddenly she gave a start, as though she had just waked up, such a start that I flew over to the other side of the carriage. Then, before I had had time to understand, to think of anything, I first received five or six terrible slaps in the face, and then a shower of punches, which came to me hard and heavy, hitting me everywhere, without my being able to ward them off in the dense obscurity which surrounded this struggle.

I stretched out my hands, trying vainly to seize her arms. Then, no longer knowing what to do, I turned around quickly, presenting to her furious attack only my back, and hiding my head in a corner of the cushioned seats.

She seemed to understand, perhaps by the sound of the blows, this ruse of a desperate man, and she stopped hitting me.

After a few minutes she went back to her corner, and kept sobbing as though her heart would break for at least an hour.

I had sat down again, very uneasy and ashamed. I would have liked to talk to her, but what could I say? I could think of nothing! Make excuses? That would be stupid! What would you have said? Nothing, you may be sure.

She was heaving great sighs now, which affected me and distressed me. I would have liked to console her, to kiss her, as one kisses a sorrowing child, to beg her pardon, to throw myself at her feet, but I did not dare.

Those situations are very annoying!

At last she became calmer, and each of us remained in his corner, motionless and speechless, while the carriage kept on, stopping from time to time for new relays. Then we would both quickly close our eyes, so as not to see each other when the bright rays of a stable lantern penetrated our Stygian darkness. Then the coach would start again, and the sweet perfumed air of the Corsican mountains caressing my cheeks and lips intoxicated me like wine.

By Jove! what a wonderful trip it would have been if my companion had not been so foolish.

Slowly daylight began to creep into the carriage, the pale light of early dawn. I looked at my neighbor. She was pretending to sleep. Then the sun, having risen behind the mountains, soon covered with light an immense blue gulf, surrounded by enormous granite-capped peaks.

My neighbor then pretended to awake. She opened her eyes (they were red); she opened her mouth as though to yawn, just as though she had slept for a long time. Then she hesitated, blushed and stammered:

"Shall we soon be there?"

"Yes, Madame, in less than an hour."

She continued, looking out in the distance:

"It's very tiresome to spend the night in a carriage."

"Yes, it makes one quite lame."

"Especially after a trip on the water."

"Oh! yes."

"Is that Ajaccio ahead of us?"

"Yes, Madame."

"I wish we were there."

"I understand that."

The sound of her voice was a little troubled, her

manner a little embarrassed, her eye a little shifty. However, she seemed to have forgotten everything.

I admired her. How instinctively artful those little minxes are! What diplomats!

After about an hour we arrived; and a big dragoon, built like a Hercules, standing before the office, waved his handkerchief on discovering the carriage.

My neighbor threw her arms around his neck and kissed him at least twenty times, repeating:

"How are you, honey? I was *so* anxious to see you!"

My trunk had been taken from the top of the coach, and I was discreetly retreating when she called me back:

"Oh, Monsieur, are you leaving without saying good-by to me?"

I stammered: "Madame, I was leaving you to your joy."

Then she said to her husband: "Darling, thank Monsieur; he was charming to me throughout the whole trip. He even offered me a seat in the carriage, which he had reserved for himself. It is a pleasure to meet such agreeable companions."

The husband shook my hand, thanking me effusively.

The young woman smiled as she watched us together—I must have looked like a fool!

# DISCOVERY

THE steamer was crowded with people and the crossing promised to be good. I was going from Havre to Trouville.

The ropes were thrown off, the whistle blew for the last time, the whole boat started to tremble, and the great wheels began to revolve, slowly at first, and then with ever-increasing rapidity.

We were gliding along the pier, black with people. Those on board were waving their handkerchiefs, as though they were leaving for America, and their friends on shore were answering in the same manner.

The big July sun was shining down on the red parasols, the light dresses, the joyous faces, and on the ocean, barely stirred by a ripple. When we were out of the harbor, the little vessel swung around the big curve and pointed her nose toward the distant shore which was barely visible through the early morning mist. On our left was the broad estuary of the Seine, her muddy water, which never mingles with that of the ocean, making large yellow streaks clearly outlined against the immense sheet of the pure green sea.

As soon as I am on a boat I feel the need of walking to and fro, like a sailor on watch. Why? I do not know. Therefore I began to thread my way along the deck through the crowd of travelers. Suddenly I heard my name called. I turned around. I beheld one of my old friends, Henri Sidoine, whom I had not seen for ten years.

We shook hands, and continued our walk, together, talking of one thing or another. Suddenly Sidoine, who had been observing the crowd of passengers, cried out angrily:

"It's disgusting; the boat is full of English people!"

It was indeed full of them. The men were standing around looking over the ocean with an all-important air, as though to say: "We are the English, the lords of the sea! Here we are!"

The young girls, formless, with shoes which reminded one of the naval constructions of their fatherland, wrapped in multi-colored shawls, were smiling vacantly at the magnificent scenery. Their small heads, planted at the top of their long bodies, wore English hats of the strangest build.

And the old maids, thinner yet, opening their characteristic jaws to the wind, seemed to threaten one with their long, yellow teeth. On passing them, one could notice the smell of rubber and of tooth wash.

Sidoine repeated, with growing anger:

"Disgusting! Can we never stop their coming to France?"

I asked, smiling:

"What have you got against them? As far as I am concerned, they don't worry me."

He snapped out:

"Of course they don't worry you! But *I* married one of them."

I stopped and laughed at him.

"Go ahead and tell me about it. Does she make you very unhappy?"

He shrugged his shoulders:

"No, not exactly."

"Then she—is not true to you?"

"Unfortunately, she is. That would be cause for a divorce, and I could get rid of her."

"Then I'm afraid I don't understand!"

"You don't understand? I'm not surprised. Well, she simply learned how to speak French—that's all! Listen.

"I didn't have the least desire of getting married when I went to spend the summer at Étretat two years ago. There is nothing more dangerous than watering-places. You have no idea how it suits young girls. Paris is the place for women and the country for young girls.

"Donkey rides, surf-bathing, breakfast on the grass, all these things are traps set for the marriageable man. And, really, there is nothing prettier than a child about eighteen running through a field or picking flowers along the road.

"I made the acquaintance of an English family which was stopping at the same hotel where I was. The father looked like those men you see over there, and the mother was like all other Englishwomen.

"They had two sons, the kind of boys who play rough games with balls, bats or rackets from morning till night; then came two daughters, the elder a dry, shriveled-up Englishwoman, the younger a dream of beauty, a heavenly blonde. When those chits make up their minds to be pretty, they are divine. This one had blue eyes, the kind of blue which seems to contain all the poetry, all the dreams, all the hopes and happiness of the world!

"What an infinity of dreams is caused by two such eyes! How well they answer the dim, eternal question of our heart!

"It must not be forgotten either that we Frenchmen adore foreign women. As soon as we meet a Russian, an Italian, a Swede, a Spaniard, or an Englishwoman with a pretty face, we immediately fall in love with her. We enthuse over everything which comes from outside—clothes, hats, gloves, guns and—women. But what a blunder!

"I believe that that which pleases us in foreign women is their accent. As soon as a woman speaks our language badly we think she is charming, if she uses the wrong word she is exquisite, and if she jabbers in an entirely unintelligible jargon, she becomes irresistible.

"My little English girl, Kate, spoke a language to be marveled at. At the beginning I could understand nothing, she invented so many new words; then I fell absolutely in love with this funny, gay dialect. All maimed, strange, ridiculous terms became delightful in her mouth. Every evening, on the terrace of the Casino, we had long conversations which resembled spoken enigmas.

"I married her! I loved her wildly, as one can only love in a dream. For true lovers only love a dream which has taken the form of a woman.

"Well, my dear fellow, the most foolish thing I ever did was to give my wife a French teacher. As long as she slaughtered the dictionary and tortured the grammar I adored her. Our conversations were simple. They revealed to me her surprising gracefulness and matchless elegance; they showed her to me as a wonderful speaking jewel, a living doll made to be kissed, knowing, after a fashion, how to express what she loved. She reminded me of the pretty little

toys which say ' papa ' and ' mamma ' when you pull a string.

" Now she talks—badly—very badly. She makes as many mistakes as ever—but I can understand her.

" I have opened my doll to look inside—and I have seen. And how I have to talk to her!

" Ah! you don't know, as I do, the opinions, the ideas, the theories of a well-educated young English girl, whom I can blame in nothing, and who repeats to me from morning till night sentences from a French reader prepared in England for the use of young ladies' schools.

" You have seen those cotillon favors, those pretty gilt papers which inclose candies with an abominable taste. I have one of them. I tore it open. I wished to eat what was inside and it disgusted me so that I feel nauseated at seeing her compatriots.

" I have married a parrot to whom some old English governess might have taught French. Do you understand? "

. . . . . .

The harbor of Trouville was now showing its wooden piers covered with people.

I said:

" Where is your wife? "

He answered:

" I took her back to Étretat."

" And you, where are you going? "

" I? Oh! I am going to rest up here at Trouville."

Then, after a pause, he added:

" You have no idea what a fool a woman can be at times! "

## THE WAKE

THE woman had died without pain, quietly, as a woman should whose life has been without blame. Now she was resting in her bed, lying on her back, her eyes closed, her features calm, her long white hair carefully arranged as though she had done it up ten minutes before dying; the whole pale countenance of the dead woman was so collected, so calm, so resigned that one could feel what a sweet soul had lived in that body, what a quiet existence this old soul had led, how easy and pure the death of this ancestor had been.

Kneeling beside the bed, her son, a magistrate with inflexible principles, and her daughter, Marguerite, known as Sister Eulalie, were weeping as though their hearts would break. She had, from childhood up, armed them with a strict moral code, teaching them religion without weakness and duty

without compromise. He, the man, had become a judge, and handled the law as a weapon with which he smote the weak ones without pity. She, the girl, influenced by the virtue which had bathed her in this austere family, had become the bride of God through her loathing for man.

They had hardly known their father, knowing only that he had made their mother most unhappy, without being told any other details.

The nun was wildly kissing the dead woman's hand, an ivory hand as white as the large Christ lying across the bed. On the other side of the long body, the other hand seemed still to be holding the sheet in the death grasp; and the sheet had preserved the little creases as a memory of those last movements which precede eternal immobility.

A few light taps on the door caused the two sobbing heads to look up, and the priest, who had just come from dinner, returned. He was red and out of breath from his interrupted digestion, for he had made himself a strong mixture of coffee and brandy in order to combat the fatigue of the last few nights and of the wake which was beginning.

He looked sad, with that assumed sadness of the priest for whom death is a bread-winner. He crossed himself, and approaching with his professional gesture: "Well, my poor children! I have come to help you pass these last sad hours." But Sister Eulalie suddenly arose. "Thank you, father, but my brother and I prefer to remain alone with her. This is our last chance to see her, and we wish to be together, all three of us, as we—we—used to be when we were small and our poor mo—mother—" Grief and tears stopped her, she could not continue.

Once more serene, the priest bowed, thinking of his bed. "As you wish, my children." He kneeled,

crossed himself, prayed, arose, and went out quietly, murmuring: " She was a saint! "

They remained alone, the dead woman and her children. The ticking of the clock, hidden in the shadow, could be heard distinctly, and through the open window drifted in the sweet smell of hay and of woods, together with the soft moonlight. No other noise could be heard over the land except the occasional croaking of the frog or the chirping of some belated insect. An infinite peace, a divine melancholy, a silent serenity surrounded this dead woman, seemed to be breathed out from her and to appease nature itself.

Then the judge, still kneeling, his head buried in the bed-clothes, cried in a voice altered by grief and deadened by the sheets and blankets: " Mamma, mamma, mamma! " And his sister, frantically striking her forehead against the woodwork, convulsed, twitching and trembling as in an epileptic fit, moaned: " Jesus, Jesus, mamma, Jesus! " And both of them, shaken by a storm of grief, gasped and choked.

The crisis slowly calmed down and they began to weep quietly, just as on the sea when a calm spell follows a squall.

A rather long time passed, and they arose and looked at their dear dead. And the memories, those distant memories, yesterday so dear, to-day so torturing, came to their minds with all the little forgotten details, those little intimate familiar details, which bring back to life the one who has left. They recalled to each other circumstances, words, smiles, intonations of the mother who was no longer to speak to them. They saw her again happy and calm; they remembered things which she had said, and a little motion of the hand, like beating time, which

she often used when emphasizing something important.

And they loved her as they never had loved her before. They measured the depth of their grief, and thus they discovered how lonesome they would find themselves.

It was their prop, their guide, their whole youth, all the best part of their lives which was disappearing, it was their bond with life, their mother, their mamma, the connecting link with their forefathers which they would thenceforth miss. They now became solitary, lonely beings; they could no longer look back.

The nun said to her brother: "You remember how mamma used always to read her old letters; they are all there in that drawer. Let us, in turn, read them, let us live her whole life to-night beside her! It would be like a road to the cross, like making the acquaintance of her mother, of our grandparents, whom we never knew, but whose letters are there and of whom she so often spoke, do you remember?"

Out of the drawer they took about ten little packages of yellow paper, tied with care and arranged one beside the other. They threw these relics on the bed and chose one of them on which the word "Father" was written; they opened and read it.

It was one of those old-fashioned letters which one finds in old family desk drawers, those epistles which smell of another century. The first one began: "My dear," another one: "My beautiful little girl," others: "My dear child," or: "My dear daughter." And suddenly the nun began to read aloud, to read over to the dead woman her whole

history, all her tender memories. The judge, resting his elbow on the bed, was listening with his eyes fastened on his mother. The motionless body seemed happy.

Sister Eulalie, interrupting herself, said suddenly: "These ought to be put in the grave with her; they ought to be used as a shroud and she ought to be buried in it." She took another package, on which no revealing name was written. She began to read in a firm voice: "My adored one, I love you wildly. Since yesterday I have been suffering the tortures of the damned, haunted by your memory. I feel your lips against mine, your eyes in mine, your breast against mine. I love you, I love you! You have driven me mad. My arms open, I gasp, moved by a wild desire to have you again. My whole soul and body cries out for you, wants you. I have kept in my mouth the taste of your kisses. . . ."

The judge had straightened himself up; the nun stopped reading; he snatched the letter from her hand and looked for the signature. There was none, but only under the words: "The man who adores you," the name: "Henry." Their father's name was René. Therefore this was not from him. The son then quickly rummaged through the package of letters, took one out and read: "I can no longer live without your caresses. . . ." Standing, severe as when sitting on the bench, he looked unmoved at the dead woman. The nun, straight as a statue, the tears stopping in the corners of her eyes, was watching her brother, waiting. Then he crossed the room slowly, went to the window and, with his looks lost in the dark night, he stood still.

When he turned around again, Sister Eulalie, her eyes dry now, was still standing near the bed, her head hanging.

He stepped forward, quickly picked up the letters and threw them pell-mell back into the drawer; then he closed the curtains of the bed.

When daylight made the candles on the table turn pale, the son slowly left his armchair, and without looking again at the mother upon whom he had passed sentence, severing the tie that united her to son and daughter, he said slowly: "Let us now retire, sister."

# SUICIDES

*To Georges Legrand.*

HARDLY a day goes by without our reading a news item like the following in some newspaper:

"On Wednesday night the people living in No. 40, Rue de ——, were awakened by two successive shots. The explosions seemed to come from the apartment occupied by M. X——. The door was broken in and the man was found bathed in his blood, still holding in one hand the revolver with which he had taken his life.

"M. X—— was fifty-seven years of age, enjoying a comfortable income, and had everything necessary to make him happy. No cause can be found for his action."

What terrible grief, what unknown suffering, hidden despair, secret wounds drive these presumably happy persons to suicide? We search, we imagine tragedies of love, we suspect financial troubles, and, as we never find anything definite, we apply to these deaths the word "mystery."

A letter found on the desk of one of these "suicides without cause," and written during his last night, beside his loaded revolver, has come into our hands. We deem it rather interesting. It reveals none of those great catastrophes which we always expect to find behind these acts of despair; but it shows us the slow succession of the little vexations of life, the disintegration of a lonely existence, whose

dreams have disappeared, it gives the reason for these tragic ends, which only nervous and high-strung people can understand.

Here it is:

" It is midnight. When I have finished this letter I shall kill myself. Why? I shall attempt to give the reasons, not for those who may read these lines, but for myself, to kindle my waning courage, to impress upon myself the fatal necessity of this act which can at best be only deferred.

" I was brought up by simple-minded parents who were unquestioning believers. And I believed as they did.

" My dream lasted a long time. The last veil has just been torn from my eyes.

" During the last few years a strange change has been taking place within me. All the events of life, which formerly had to me all the glow of a beautiful sunset, are now fading away. The true meaning of things has appeared to me in its brutal reality; and the true reason for love has bred in me disgust even for this poetic sentiment: ' We are the eternal toys of foolish and charming illusions, which are always being renewed.'

" Then, on growing older, I had become partly reconciled to the awful mystery of life, to the uselessness of effort, when the emptiness of everything appeared to me in a new light, this evening, after dinner.

" Formerly, I was happy! Everything pleased me: the passing women, the appearance of the streets, the place where I lived; and I even took an interest in the cut of my clothes. But the repetition of the same sights has had the result of filling my heart with weariness and disgust, just as one would

feel were one to go every night to the same theater.

" For the last thirty years I have been rising at the same hour; and, at the same restaurant, for thirty years I have been eating at the same hours the same dishes brought me by different waiters.

" I have tried travel. The loneliness which one feels in strange places terrified me. I felt so alone, so small on the earth that I quickly started on my homeward journey.

" But here the unchanging expression of my furniture, which has stood for thirty years in the same place, the smell of my apartments (for, with time, each dwelling takes on a particular odor), each night, these and other things disgust me and make me sick of living thus.

" Everything repeats itself endlessly. The way in which I put my key in the lock, the place where I always find my matches, the first object which meets my eye when I enter the room, make me feel like jumping out of the window and putting an end to those monotonous events from which we can never escape.

" Each day, when I shave, I feel an inordinate desire to cut my throat; and my face, always the same, which I see in the little mirror, with soap on my cheeks, has several times made me weak from sadness.

" Now I even hate to be with people whom I used to meet with pleasure: I know them so well, I can tell just what they are going to say and what I am going to answer. Each brain is like a circus, where the same horse keeps circling around eternally. We must circle around always, around the same ideas, the same joys, the same pleasures, the same habits, the same beliefs, the same sensations of disgust.

" The fog was terrible this evening. It wrapped

up the Boulevard, where the street lights were darkened and looked like smoking candles. A heavier weight than usual pressed down on my shoulders. Perhaps my digestion was bad.

" For good digestion is everything in life. It gives the inspiration to the artist, amorous desires to young people, clear ideas to thinkers, the joy of life to everybody, and it also allows one to eat much (which is one of the greatest pleasures). A sick stomach induces skepticism, unbelief, nightmares and desires for death. I have often noticed this fact. Perhaps I would not kill myself if my digestion had been good this evening.

" When I sat down in the armchair where I have been sitting every day for thirty years, I glanced around me, and just then I was seized by such a terrible distress that I thought I must go mad.

" I tried to think of what I could do to run away from myself. Every occupation struck me as being worse even than inaction. Then I bethought me of putting a little order in my papers.

" For a long time I have been thinking of clearing out my drawers; for, for the last thirty years, I have been throwing my letters and bills pell-mell into the same desk, and this confusion has often caused me considerable trouble. But I feel such moral and physical laziness at the sole idea of putting anything in order, that I have never had the courage to begin this tedious business.

" I therefore opened my desk, intending to choose among my old papers and destroy the majority of them.

" At first I was bewildered by this array of documents, yellowed by age, then I chose one.

" Oh! if you cherish life, never disturb the burying-ground of old letters!

" And if, perchance, you should, take the contents by the handful, close your eyes that you may not read a word, so that you may not recognize some forgotten handwriting which may dash you suddenly into a sea of memories; carry these papers to the fire; and when they are in ashes, crush them to an invisible powder, or otherwise you are lost—just as I have been lost for an hour.

" The first letters which I read did not interest me greatly. They were recent, and came from living men whom I still meet often enough and whose presence does not move me to any great extent. But suddenly one envelope made me start. My name was traced on it in a large, bold handwriting; and suddenly tears came to my eyes. That one was from my dearest friend, the companion of my youth, the confidant of my hopes; and he appeared before me so clearly, with his pleasant smile and his hand outstretched, that a cold shiver ran down my back. Yes, yes, the dead came back, for I saw him! Our memory is a more perfect world than the universe: it gives back life to those who no longer exist.

" With trembling hand and dimmed eyes I reread everything that he told me, and in my poor sobbing heart I felt a wound so painful that I began to groan as a man whose bones were slowly being crushed.

" Then I traveled over my whole life, just as one travels along a river. I recognized people, so long forgotten that I no longer knew their names. Alone their faces lived in me. In the letters of my mother I found again the old servants, the shape of our house, and the little, insignificant odds and ends which stick in our minds.

" Yes, I suddenly saw again all my mother's old gowns, the different styles which she adopted and

the several ways in which she dressed her hair. She haunted me especially in a silk dress trimmed with old lace; and I remembered a thing which she had told me one day when she was wearing this dress. She had said: 'Robert, my child, if you do not stand up straight you will be round-shouldered all your life.'

"Then, opening another drawer, I found myself face to face with memories of tender passions: a dancing-pump, a torn handkerchief, even a garter, locks of hair and dried flowers. Then the sweet romances of my life, whose living heroines are now white-haired, plunged me into the deep melancholy of things. Oh, the young brows where blond locks curl, the caress of the hands, the glance which speaks, the hearts which beat, that smile which promises the lips, those lips which promise the embrace! And the first kiss—that endless kiss which makes you close your eyes, which drowns all thought in the immeasurable joy of approaching possession!

"Taking these old pledges of former love in both my hands, I covered them with furious caresses, and in my soul, torn by these memories, I saw them each again at the hour of surrender; and I suffered a torture more cruel than all the tortures invented in all the fables about hell.

"One last letter remained. It was written by me and dictated fifty years ago by my penmanship teacher. Here it is:

"'My Dear Little Mamma:

"'I am to-day seven years old. It is the age of reason. I take advantage of it to thank you for having brought me into this world.

"'Your little son, who loves you.

"'Robert.'

"That was all. I had arrived at the beginning, and suddenly I looked forward to the rest of my

days. I saw hideous and lonely old age, and approaching infirmities, and everything over and gone. And nobody near me!

"My revolver is here, on the table. I load it. Never re-read your old letters!"

And that is how many men kill themselves; and we search in vain to discover some great sorrow in their lives.

# THE GAMEKEEPER

IT was after dinner, and we were talking about adventures and accidents which happened while hunting.

An old friend, known to all of us, M. Boniface, a great hunter and connoisseur of good wine, a man of wonderful physique, witty and gay, and endowed with an ironical and resigned philosophy, which manifested itself always by biting wit and never by sadness, suddenly exclaimed:

"I know a story, or rather a tragedy, which is somewhat peculiar. It is not at all like those which one hears of usually, and I have never told it, thinking that it would interest no one.

"It is not at all sympathetic. I mean by that, that it does not arouse the kind of interest which pleases or which moves one agreeably.

"Here is the story:

"I was then about thirty-five years of age, and a most enthusiastic hunter.

"In those days I owned a lonely bit of property in the neighborhood of Jumièges, surrounded by forests and abounding in hares and rabbits. I was accustomed to spending four or five days, alone, there each year, there not being room enough to allow of my bringing a friend with me.

" I had placed there as gamekeeper an old retired *gendarme,* a good man, hot-tempered, a severe disciplinarian, a terror to poachers and fearing nothing. He lived all alone, far from the village, in a little house, or rather hut, consisting of two rooms downstairs, with kitchen and store-room, and two upstairs. One of them, a kind of box just large enough to accommodate a bed, a cupboard and a chair, was reserved for my use.

" Old man Cavalier lived in the other one. When I said that he was alone in this place, I was wrong. He had taken his nephew with him, a young scamp about fourteen years old, who used to go to the village and run errands for the old man.

" This young scapegrace was long and lanky, with yellow hair, so light that it resembled the fluff of a plucked chicken, so thin that he seemed bald. Besides this, he had enormous feet and the hands of a giant.

" He was cross-eyed, and never looked at anyone. He struck me as being in the same relation to the human race as ill-smelling beasts are to the animal race. He reminded me of a polecat.

" He slept in a kind of hole at the top of the stairs which led to the two rooms.

" But during my short stops at the Pavilion—so I called the hut—Marius would give up his nook to an old woman from Ecorcheville, called Céleste, who used to come and cook for me, as old man Cavalier's stews were not sufficient for my healthy appetite.

" You now know the characters and the locality. Here is the story:

" It was on the fifteenth of October, 1854—I shall remember that date as long as I live.

" I left Rouen on horseback, followed by my dog Bock, a big brach-hound from Poitou, full-chested

and large-mouthed, which could fetch like a spaniel.

" I was carrying my satchel behind me and my gun swung over my shoulder. It was a cold, windy, gloomy day, with clouds rushing hither and thither through the sky.

" As I went up the hill at Canteleu, I looked out over the broad valley of the Seine, which was cut by the snake-like river as far as the eye could see. To the right, Rouen's towers stood out against the sky, and to the left the view stopped at the distant, forest-covered hills. Then I crossed the forest of Roumare and, toward five o'clock, reached the Pavilion, where Cavalier and Céleste were awaiting me.

" For ten years I had appeared there at the same time, in the same manner; and for ten years the same faces had greeted me with the same words.

" ' Welcome, master! We hope your health is good.'

" Cavalier had hardly changed. He withstood time like an old tree; but Céleste, especially in the past four years, had become unrecognizable.

" She was almost bent in two, and, although still active, when she walked her body was almost bent at right angles to her legs.

" The old woman, who was very devoted to me, always seemed touched on seeing me again, and each time, as I left, she would say:

" ' This may be the last time, master.'

" The sad, timid farewell of this old servant, this hopeless resignation to the inevitable fate which was not far off for her, moved me strangely each year.

" I dismounted, and while Cavalier, whom I had greeted, was leading my horse to the little shed which served as a stable, I entered, followed by Céleste, into the kitchen, which also served as dining-room.

" Then the gamekeeper joined us. I saw at first

glance that something was the matter. He seemed preoccupied, ill at ease, worried.

" I said to him:

" ' Well, Cavalier, is everything all right? '

" He muttered:

" ' Yes and no. There are things I don't like.'

" I asked:

" ' What? Tell me about it.'

" But he shook his head.

" ' No, not yet, Monsieur. I do not wish to bother you with my little troubles so soon after your arrival.'

" I insisted, but he absolutely refused to give me any information before dinner. From his expression, I could tell that it was something very serious.

" Not knowing what to say to him, I asked:

" ' How about game? Much of it this year? '

" ' Oh, yes! You'll find all you want. Thank heaven, I had my eyes open.'

" He said that with so much seriousness, with such sad solemnity, that it was really almost funny. His big gray mustache seemed almost ready to drop off from his lips.

" Suddenly I remembered that I had not yet seen his nephew.

" ' Where is Marius? Why does he not show himself? '

" The gamekeeper started, looking me suddenly in the face:

" ' Well, Monsieur, I had rather tell you the whole business right away; it's on account of him that I am feeling badly.'

" ' Ah! Well, where is he? '

" ' Over in the stable, Monsieur. I was waiting for the right time to bring him out.'

" ' What has he done? '

"'Well, Monsieur——'

"The gamekeeper, however, hesitated, his voice altered and shaky, his face suddenly furrowed by the deep lines of an old man.

"He continued slowly:

"'Well, I found out, last winter, that someone was poaching in the woods of Roseraies, but I couldn't seem to catch the man. I spent night after night on the lookout for him. In vain. During that time, the poaching began over by Ecorcheville. I was growing thin from vexation. But as for catching the trespasser, impossible! One might have thought that the rascal was forewarned of my plans.

"'But one day, while I was brushing Marius' Sunday trousers, I found forty cents in his pocket. Where had he gotten them?

"'I thought the matter over for about a week, and I noticed that he used to go out; he would leave just as I was returning—yes, Monsieur.

"'Then I started to watch him, without the slightest idea of what the truth might be. One morning, just as I was going to bed before him, I got right up again, and followed him. For shadowing a man, there is nobody like me, Monsieur.

"'And I caught him, Marius, poaching on your lands, Monsieur; he my nephew, I your keeper!

"'The blood rushed to my head, and I almost killed him on the spot, I hit him so hard. Oh! yes, I thrashed him all right. And I promised him that he would get another beating from my hand, before you, as an example.

"'There! I have grown thin from sorrow. You know how it is when one is vexed like that. But tell me, what would you have done? The boy has no father or mother, and I am the last one of his blood; I kept him, I couldn't drive him out, could I?

"'I told him that if it happened again I would have no more pity for him, all would be over. There! Did I do right, Monsieur?'

"I answered, holding out my hand:

"'You did well, Cavalier; you are an honest man.'

"He rose.

"'Thank you, Monsieur. Now I am going to fetch him. I must give him his thrashing, as an example.'

"I knew that it was hopeless to try and turn the old man from his idea. I therefore let him have his own way.

"He got the rascal and brought him back by the ear.

"I was seated on a cane chair, with the solemn expression of a judge.

"Marius seemed to have grown; he was homelier even than the year before, with his evil, sneaking expression.

"His big hands seemed gigantic.

"His uncle pushed him up to me, and, in his soldierly voice, said:

"'Beg the gentleman's pardon.'

"The boy didn't say a word.

"Then seizing him under the arms, the former *gendarme* lifted him right off the ground, and began to spank him with such force that I rose to stop the blows.

"The child was now howling: 'Mercy! mercy! mercy! I promise——'

"Cavalier put him back on the ground and forced him to his knees:

"'Beg for pardon,' he said.

"With eyes lowered, the scamp murmured:

"'Pardon!'

" Then his uncle lifted him to his feet, and dismissed him with a slap which almost knocked him down again.

" He escaped, and I did not see him again that evening.

" Cavalier appeared overwhelmed.

" ' He is a bad egg,' he said.

" And throughout the whole dinner, he kept repeating:

" ' Oh! that makes me feel badly, Monsieur, that makes me feel badly.'

" I tried to comfort him, but in vain.

" I went to bed early, so that I might start out at daybreak.

" My dog was already asleep on the floor, at the foot of my bed, when I put out the light.

" I was awakened toward the middle of the night by the furious barking of my dog Bock. I immediately noticed that my room was full of smoke. I jumped out of bed, made a light, ran to the door and opened it. A cloud of flames burst in. The house was on fire.

" I quickly closed the door, barricaded it with a heavy oak beam, and, drawing on some clothes, I first lowered my dog through the window, by means of a rope made of my sheets; then, having thrown out the rest of my clothes, my game-bag and my gun, I in turn escaped the same way.

" I began to shout with all my might: ' Cavalier! Cavalier! Cavalier! '

" But the gamekeeper did not wake up. He had the sound sleep of an old *gendarme*.

" However, I could see through the lower windows that the whole ground-floor was nothing but a roaring furnace; I also noticed that it had been filled with straw in order to help the fire.

" Somebody must purposely have set fire to the place!

" I continued shrieking wildly: ' Cavalier! '

" Then the thought struck me that the smoke might be suffocating him. I got an idea, and slipping two cartridges into my gun, I shot straight for his window.

" The six panes of glass shattered into the room in a cloud of glass. This time the old man had heard me, and he appeared, dazed, in his night-shirt, bewildered by the glare which illumined the whole front of his house.

" I cried to him:

" ' Your house is on fire! Escape through the window! Quick! Quick! '

" The flames were coming out through all the cracks down-stairs, were licking along the wall, were creeping toward him and going to surround him. He jumped and landed on his feet, like a cat.

" It was none too early. The thatch roof cracked in the middle, right over the staircase, which formed a kind of flue for the fire downstairs; and an immense red jet jumped up into the air, spreading like a stream of water and sprinkling a shower of sparks around the hut. In a few seconds it was nothing but a pool of flames.

" Cavalier, thunderstruck, asked:

" ' How did the fire start? '

" I answered:

" ' Somebody lit it in the kitchen.'

" He muttered:

" ' Who could have started the fire? '

" And I, suddenly guessing, answered:

" ' Marius! '

" The old man understood. He stammered:

" ' Good God! That is why he didn't return.'

" A terrible thought flashed through my mind. I cried:

" ' And Céleste! Céleste! '

" He did not answer. The house caved in before us, forming only an enormous, bright, blinding brazier, an awe-inspiring funeral-pile, where the poor woman could no longer be anything but a glowing ember, a glowing ember of human flesh.

" We had not heard a single cry.

" As the fire crept toward the shed, I suddenly bethought me of my horse, and Cavalier ran to free it.

" Hardly had he opened the door of the stable, when a nimble and rapid body slipped between his legs, and threw him on his face. It was Marius, running for all he was worth.

" The man was up in a second. He tried to run after the wretch, but, seeing that he could not catch him, and maddened by an irresistible anger, yielding to one of those thoughtless impulses which we cannot foresee or prevent, he picked up my gun, which was lying on the ground near him, threw it to his shoulder, and, before I could make a motion, he pulled the trigger without even noticing whether or not the weapon was loaded.

" One of the cartridges which I had put in to announce the fire had not been discharged, and the charge caught the fugitive right in the back, and threw him on his face, bleeding profusely. He immediately began to claw the earth with his hands and with his knees, as though trying to run on four feet, after the habit of rabbits which have been wounded to death and see the hunter approaching.

" I rushed forward to the child, but I could already hear the death-rattle. He passed away before the fire was extinguished, without having said a word.

" Cavalier, still in his shirt, his legs bare, was standing near us, motionless, dazed.

" When the people from the village arrived, my gamekeeper was taken away, like an insane man.

" I appeared at the trial as witness, and related the facts in detail, without changing a thing. Cavalier was acquitted. He disappeared that very day, leaving the country.

" I have never seen him since.

" There, gentlemen, that is my story."

# LASTING LOVE

IT was the end of the dinner that opened the hunt. The Marquis de Bertrans with his guests sat around a brightly lighted table, covered with fruits and flowers. The conversation drifted to love. Immediately there arose an animated discussion, the same eternal discussion as to whether it were possible to love more than once. Examples were given of persons who had loved once; these were offset by those who had loved violently many times. The men agreed that passion, like sickness, may attack the same person several times, unless it strikes to kill. This conclusion seemed quite incontestable. The women, however, who based their opinion on poetry rather than on practical observation, maintained that love, the great passion, may come only once to mortals. It resembles powder, they said, this love. A heart once touched with it becomes forever so void, so ravaged, so consumed, that no other strong sentiment can find rest in it, not even a dream.

The Marquis, who had indulged in many love affairs, disputed this belief.

"I tell you it is possible to love several times with all one's heart and soul. You quote examples

of persons who have killed themselves to prove the impossibility of a second passion. I wager that if they had not foolishly committed suicide and so destroyed the possibility of a second experience they would have found a new love and still another and so on till death. It is with love as with drink. He who has once indulged is forever a slave. It is a thing of temperament."

They chose the old Doctor as arbitrator. He thought it was as the Marquis has said, a thing of temperament.

"As for me," he said, "I once knew of a love which lasted fifty-five years without one day's respite, which ended only with death." The wife of the Marquis clasped her hands.

"That is beautiful! Ah, what a dream to be loved in such a way! What bliss to live for fifty-five years enveloped in an unwavering, penetrating affection! How this happy being must have blessed his life, to be so adored!"

The Doctor smiled.

"You are not mistaken, Madame, on this point—the loved one was a man. You even know him; it is Monsieur Chonquet, the chemist. As to the woman, you knew her also, the old chair-mender, who came every year to the Château." The enthusiasm of the women fell. Some expressed their contempt with "Pouah!" for the love of common people did not interest them. The Doctor continued: "Three months ago I was called to the death-bed of the old chair-mender. The priest had preceded me. She wished to make us the executors of her will. In order that we might understand her conduct, she told us the story of her life. It is most singular and touching. Her father and mother were both chair-menders. She never lived long in any one place. As

a little child she wandered about with them, dirty, unkempt, hungry. They visited many towns, leaving their horse, wagon and dog just outside the limits, where the child played in the grass alone until her parents had repaired all the broken chairs in the place. They seldom spoke, except to cry, ' Chairs! Chairs! Mender of chairs! '

" When the little one strayed too far away, she would be called back by the harsh, angry voice of her father. She never heard a word of affection. When she grew older, she fetched and carried the broken chairs. Then it was she made friends with the little street urchins, but their parents always called them away and scolded them for speaking to the barefooted mender. Often the boys threw stones at her. Once a kind woman gave her a few pennies. She saved them most carefully.

" One day—she was then eleven years old—as she picked her way through a country town she met, behind the cemetery, the little Chonquet, weeping bitterly, because one of his playmates had stolen two precious pennies. The tears of the small villager, one of those much-envied mortals, who, she imagined, never knew trouble, completely upset her. She approached him and, bowing, asked the cause of his grief, and put into his hands all her savings. He took them without hesitation and dried his eyes. Wild with joy, she kissed him. He was busy counting his money, and did not object. She, seeing that she was not repulsed, began again to kiss him and even gave him a tremendous hug—then she ran away.

" What was going on in her poor little head? Was it because she had sacrificed all of her fortune that she became madly fond of him, or was it because she had given him her first tender kiss? The mystery is alike for children and for those of riper years.

For months she dreamed of that corner near the cemetery and of the little villager. She stole pennies from her parents to give him at their next meeting. When she returned to the spot near the cemetery, he was not there. Passing his father's drug store, she caught sight of him behind the counter. He was sitting between a large red globe and a blue one. She only loved him the more, and, wrought up to an ecstasy by the sight of him surrounded by the brilliant-colored globes, she nearly fainted with emotion. She cherished forever in her heart this beautiful sight. The following year she met him near the school, playing marbles. She threw herself on him, took him in her arms, and kissed him so passionately that he cried aloud. To quiet him, she gave him all her money. Three francs! A real gold mine, at which he gazed with staring eyes.

"After this he allowed her to caress him as much as she wished. During the next four years she put into his hands all her savings, which he pocketed conscientiously in exchange for kisses. At one time it was thirty sous, at another two francs. Again, she only had twelve sous. She wept with grief and shame, explaining brokenly that it had been a poor year. The next time she brought five francs, in one whole piece, which made her laugh with joy. She no longer thought of any one but the boy, and he watched for her with impatience; sometimes he would run to meet her. This made her heart thump with joy. Suddenly he disappeared. He had gone to boarding-school. She found this out by careful investigation. She soon ingratiated herself with his parents and used her diplomacy in order that they might call him home for the holidays. After a year of intrigue she met with success. She had not seen him for two years, and scarcely recognized him, he

was so changed, tall, beautiful and dignified in his uniform, with its brass buttons. He pretended not to know her, and passed by without a glance. She wept for two days and since then loved and suffered until the end.

"Every year he returned and she passed him, not daring to lift her eyes. He never condescended to turn his head toward her. She loved him madly, hopelessly. She said to me:

"'He is the only man whom I have ever seen. I don't even know if another exists.' Her parents died. She continued their work.

"One day, on entering the village, where her heart always remained, she saw Chonquet coming out of his pharmacy with a young lady leaning on his arm. She was his wife. That night the chair-mender threw herself into the river. A drunkard passing the spot pulled her out and took her to the drug store. Young Chonquet came down in his dressing-gown to revive her. Without seeming to know who she was, he undressed her and rubbed her; then he said, in a harsh voice:

"'You are mad! People must not do stupid things like that.' His voice brought her to life again, and she was happy for a long time. He refused remuneration for his trouble, although she insisted.

"All her life passed in this way. She worked, thinking always of him. She began to buy medicines at his pharmacy; this gave her a chance to talk to him and to see him closely. In a way, she was still able to give him money.

"As I said before, she died this spring. When she had closed her pathetic story she entreated me to take her earnings to the man she loved. She had worked only that she might leave him something to remind him of her after death. I gave the priest

fifty francs for her funeral expenses. The next morning I took the rest to Monsieur Chonquet as he was finishing his breakfast. His wife sat at the table, fat and red, important and self-satisfied. They welcomed me and offered me some coffee, which I accepted. Then I began my story in a trembling voice, sure that they would be softened, even to tears. As soon as Chonquet understood that he had been loved by that vagabond! that chair-mender! that wanderer!' he swore with indignation, as though his reputation had been sullied, the respect of decent people lost, his personal honor, something precious and dearer to him than life, gone. His exasperated wife kept repeating: 'That thing! That thing!'

"Seeming unable to find words suitable to the enormity, he stood up and began striding about. He muttered: 'Can you understand anything so horrible, Doctor? Oh, if I had only known it while she was alive, I should have had her thrown into prison. I promise you she would not have escaped.'

"I was dumfounded; I hardly knew what to think or say, but I had to finish my mission. 'She commissioned me,' I said, 'to give you her savings, which amount to three thousand five hundred francs. As what I have just told you seems to be very disagreeable, perhaps you would prefer to give this money to the poor.'

"They looked at me, that man and woman, speechless with amazement. I took the few thousand francs from out of my pocket. Wretched-looking money from every country. Pennies and gold pieces all mixed together. Then I asked:

"'What is your decision?'

"Madame Chonquet spoke to me first. 'Well, since it is the dying woman's wish, it seems to me impossible to refuse it.'

"Her husband said, in a shamefaced manner: 'We could buy something for our children with it.'

"I answered dryly: 'As you wish.'

"He replied: 'Well, give it to us anyhow, since she commissioned you to do so; we will find a way to use it for some good purpose.'

"I gave them the money, bowed and left.

"The next day Chonquet came to me and said brusquely:

"'That woman left her wagon here—what have you done with it?'

"'Nothing; take it if you wish.'

"'It's just what I wanted,' he added, and walked off. I called him back and said:

"'She also left her old horse and two dogs. Don't you need them?'

"He stared at me surprised: 'Well, no! Really, what would I do with them?'

"'Dispose of them as you like.'

"He laughed and held out his hand to me. I shook it. What will you? The doctor and the druggist must not be at enmity. I have kept the dogs. The priest took the old horse. The wagon is useful to Chonquet, and with the money he has bought railroad stock. That is the only deep, unfailing example of love that I have ever known in my whole existence."

The Doctor looked up. The Marquise, whose eyes were full of tears, sighed and said:

"There is no denying the fact, only women know how to love."

# INDISCRETION

THEY had loved each other before marriage with a pure and lofty love. They had first met by the seashore. He had found this young girl charming, as she passed by with her light-colored parasol and her dainty dress clearly outlined against the horizon. He had loved her, blond and frail, in this impressive frame of blue ocean and azure sky. He could not distinguish the tenderness which this budding woman awoke in him from the vague and powerful emotion which the fresh salt air and the grand scenery of surf and sunshine and waves stirred up in his soul.

She, on the other hand, had loved him because he courted her, because he was young, rich, kind, and attentive. She had loved him because it is natural for young girls to love men who whisper sweet nothings to them.

So for three months they had lived side by side and hand in hand. The greetings which they exchanged in the morning before the bath, in the freshness of the new-born day, or in the evening on the sand, under the stars, in the warmth of a calm night, whispered low, very low, already had the flavor of kisses, though their lips had never met.

Each dreamed of the other at night, each thought

of the other on awakening, and, without yet having voiced their sentiments, each longed for the other, body and soul.

After marriage their love descended to earth. It was at first a tireless, sensuous passion, then exalted tenderness composed of tangible poetry, very proper caresses, and new and foolish inventions. Every glance and gesture was an expression of passion.

But, little by little, without even noticing it, they began to get tired of each other. Love was still strong, but they had nothing more to reveal to each other, nothing more to learn from each other, no new tale of endearment, no unexpected outburst, no new way of expressing the well-known, oft-repeated verb.

They tried, however, to rekindle the dwindling flame of their first love. Every day they tried some new trick or desperate attempt to bring back to their hearts the uncooled ardor of their first days of married life. They tried moonlight walks under the trees, in the sweet warmth of the summer evenings, the poetry of mist-covered beaches, the excitement of public festivals.

One morning Henriette said to Paul:

"Will you take me to a café for dinner?"

"Certainly, dearie."

"To a well-known café?"

"Of course!"

He looked at her with a questioning glance, seeing that she was thinking of something which she did not wish to say.

She went on:

"You know, one of those cafés—oh, how can I explain myself?—in a sporty café!"

He smiled: "Of course, I understand—you mean

in one of the cafés which are commonly called Bohemian."

"Yes, that's it. But take me to one of the big places, one where you are known, one where you have already supped—no—dined—well, you know—I—I—oh! I will never dare say it!"

"Go ahead, dearie. Little secrets should no longer exist between us."

"No, I don't dare."

"Go on; don't be prudish. Tell me."

"Well, I—I—I want to be taken for your sweetheart—there! and I want the boys, who do not know that you are married, to take me for such; and you too—I want you to think that I am your sweetheart for one hour, in that place which must hold so many memories for you. There! And I will play that I am your sweetheart. It's awful, I know—I am abominably ashamed, I am as red as a beet. Don't look at me!"

He laughed, greatly amused, and answered:

"All right, we will go to-night to a very swell place where I am well known."

Toward seven o'clock they went up the stairs of one of the big cafés on the Boulevard, he smiling, with the look of a conqueror, she timid, veiled, delighted. They were immediately shown to one of the luxurious private dining-rooms, furnished with four large arm-chairs and a red plush couch. The head waiter entered and brought them the *menu*. Paul handed it to his wife.

"What do you want to eat?"

"I don't care; order whatever is good."

After placing his coat in the hands of the waiter, he ordered the dinner and called for champagne.

The waiter looked at the young woman and smiled. He took the order and murmured:

"Will Monsieur Paul have his champagne sweet or dry?"

"Dry, very dry."

Henriette was pleased to hear that this man knew her husband's name.

They sat on the couch, side by side, and began to eat.

Ten candles lighted them, and were reflected in the mirrors all around the room, which seemed to increase the brilliancy a thousand-fold.

Henriette drank glass after glass in order to keep up courage, although she already felt dizzy after the first few glasses. Paul, excited by the memories which returned to him, kept kissing his wife's hands. His eyes were sparkling.

She was feeling strangely excited in this new place, restless, pleased, a little ruffled, but full of life. Two waiters, serious, silent, accustomed to seeing and forgetting everything, to moving only when it was necessary and to leaving when they felt that they were superfluous, were silently flitting hither and thither.

Toward the middle of the dinner, Henriette was well under the influence of champagne. She was prattling along fearlessly, her cheeks flushed, her eyes glistening.

"Come on, Paul; tell me everything."

"What, sweetheart?"

"I don't dare tell you."

"Go on!"

"Have you loved many women before me?"

He hesitated, a little perplexed, not knowing

whether he should hide his adventures or boast of them.

She continued:

"Oh! please tell me. How many have you loved?"

"A few."

"How many?"

"I don't know. How do you expect me to know such things?"

"Haven't you counted them?"

"Of course not."

"Then you must have loved a good many!"

"Perhaps."

"About how many? Just tell me about how many."

"But I don't know, dearest. Some years a good many, and some years only a few."

"How many a year, did you say?"

"Sometimes twenty or thirty, sometimes only four or five."

"Oh! that makes more than a hundred in all!"

"Yes, just about."

"Oh! I think that is dreadful!"

"Why dreadful?"

"Because it's dreadful when you think of it—all those women—and always—always the same thing. Oh! it's dreadful, just the same—more than a hundred women!"

He was surprised that she should think that dreadful, and answered, with the air of superiority which men take with women when they wish to make them understand that they have said something foolish:

"That's funny! If it is dreadful to have a hundred women, it's dreadful to have one."

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"Why not?"

"Because with one woman you have a real bond of love which attaches you to her, while with a hundred women it's not the same at all. There is no real love. I don't understand how a man can associate with such women."

"But they are all right."

"No, they can't be!"

"Yes, they are!"

"Oh, stop; you disgust me!"

"But then, why did you ask me how many sweethearts I had had?"

"Because——"

"That's no reason!"

"What were they — actresses, little shop-girls, or society women?"

"A few of each."

"It must have been rather monotonous toward the last."

"Oh, no; it's amusing to change."

She remained thoughtful, staring at her champagne glass. It was full—she drank it in one gulp; then putting it back on the table, she threw her arms around her husband's neck and murmured in his ear:

"Oh! how I love you, sweetheart! how I love you!"

He threw his arms around her in a passionate

embrace. A waiter, who was just entering, backed out, closing the door. Service was interrupted for about five minutes.

When the head waiter came back, solemn and dignified, bringing fruits and dessert, she was once more holding between her fingers a full glass, and staring down through the amber liquid as though seeing unknown things. She murmured in a dreamy voice:

"Yes, it must be fun!"

# THE BARONESS

OME with me," said my friend Boisrené, "you will see some very interesting bric-à-brac and works of art there."

He conducted me to the first floor of an elegant house in one of the big streets of Paris. We were welcomed by a very pleasing man, with excellent manners, who led us from room to room, showing us rare things, the price of which he mentioned carelessly. Large sums, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty thousand francs, dropped from his lips with such grace and ease that one could not doubt that this gentleman-merchant had millions shut up in his safe.

I had known him by reputation for a long time. Very bright, clever, intelligent, he acted as intermediary for all sorts of transactions. He kept in touch with all the richest amateurs in Paris, and even of Europe and America, knowing their tastes and preferences; he apprised them by letter, or by wire if they lived in a distant city, as soon as he knew of some work of art which might suit them.

Men of the best society had had recourse to him

in hours of difficulty, either to find money for gambling or to pay off a debt, or to sell a picture, a family jewel, or a tapestry.

It was said that he never refused his services when he saw a chance of gain.

Boisrené seemed very intimate with this strange merchant. They must have worked together in many a deal. I observed the man with great interest.

He was tall, thin, bald, and very elegant. His soft, insinuating voice had a peculiar, tempting charm which seemed to give to the objects a special value. When he held anything in his hands, he turned it round and round, looking at it with such skill, refinement, and sympathy that the object seemed immediately to be beautified and transformed by his look and touch. And the value increased in one's estimation, after the object had passed from the show-case through his hands.

"And your Christ," said Boisrené, "that beautiful Renaissance Christ which you showed me last year?"

The man smiled and answered:

"It has been sold, and in a very peculiar manner. There is a real Parisian story for you! Would you like to hear it?"

"With pleasure."

"Do you know the Baroness Samoris?"

"Yes and no. I have seen her once, but I know what she is!"

"You know—everything?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling me, so that I can see that you are not mistaken?"

"Certainly. Madame Samoris is a woman of the world who has a daughter, without anyone having known her husband. At any rate, if she has had no

husband her lovers have been very discreet, for she is received in a certain tolerant or blind society. She goes to church and devoutly partakes of communion, so that everyone may know it, and that she may not be compromised. She expects her daughter to marry well. Is that correct? ''

'' Yes, but I will complete your information. She is a woman who is more respected by her lovers than if she had none. That is a rare quality, for in this manner she can get what she wishes from a man. The man whom she has chosen, without knowing it himself, has courted her for a long time, has desired her modestly, obtains her with astonishment and possesses her with consideration. He does not notice that he is paying, she is so tactful; and she maintains her relations on such a footing of reserve and dignity that he would slap the first man who dared doubt the virtue of his sweetheart. And all this in the best of faith.

'' Several times I have been able to render little services to this woman. She has no secrets for me.

'' Toward the beginning of January she came to me in order to borrow thirty thousand francs. Naturally, I did not lend them to her; but, as I wished to oblige her, I told her to explain her situation to me completely, so that I might see whether there was not something I could do for her.

'' She told me her troubles in such cautious language that she could not have spoken more delicately of her child's first communion. I finally managed to understand that times were hard, and that she was penniless.

'' The commercial crisis, political unrest, rumors of war, had made money scarce even in the hands of lovers. And then, of course, she could not take the first man who came along.

" She had to have a man in the best of society, who could strengthen her reputation as well as help her financially. A reveler, no matter how rich, would have compromised her forever and would have made the marriage of her daughter quite a problem.

" She had to support her household and continue to receive lavishly, in order not to lose the opportunity of finding, among her numerous visitors, the discreet and distinguished friend for whom she was waiting, and whom she would choose.

" I showed her that my thirty thousand francs would have but little likelihood of returning to me; for, after eating them up, she would have to find at least sixty thousand more, in a lump, to pay me back.

" She seemed extremely sorry when she heard this. I did not know just what to do, when an idea, a really brilliant idea, struck me.

" I had just bought this Renaissance Christ which I showed you, an admirable piece of workmanship, one of the finest of its kind that I have ever seen.

" ' My dear friend,' I said to her, ' I am going to bring this ivory to you. You will invent some ingenious, touching, poetic story, anything that you wish, to explain your desire for parting with it. It is, of course, a family heirloom left you by your father.

" ' I myself will send you amateurs, or will bring them to you. The rest concerns you. Before they come I will drop you a line about their situation, both social and financial. This Christ is worth fifty thousand francs; but I will let it go for thirty thousand. The difference will be for you.'

" She considered the matter seriously for several minutes, and then answered: ' Yes, it is perhaps a good idea. I thank you very much.'

" The next day I sent her my Christ, and the same evening the Baron de Saint-Hospital.

" For three months I sent her my best clients, those most solid in business. But I heard nothing more from her.

" One day I received a visit of a foreigner who spoke very little French. I decided to introduce him personally to the Baroness, in order to see how she was getting along.

" A footman in black livery received us and ushered us into a quiet little parlor, furnished with taste, where we waited for several minutes. She appeared, charming as usual, extended her hand to me and invited us to be seated; and when I had explained the reason for my visit, she rang.

" The footman appeared.

" ' See if Mademoiselle Isabelle can let us enter her chapel.' The young girl herself appeared. She was about fifteen years of age, modest and good to look upon in the sweet freshness of her youth. She wished to conduct us herself to her chapel.

" It was a kind of religious boudoir where a silver lamp was burning before the Christ, my Christ, lying on a black velvet bed. The setting was charming and very clever. The child crossed herself and then said:

" ' Look, gentlemen. Isn't it beautiful? '

" I took the object, examined it, and declared it to be remarkable. The foreigner also examined it, but he seemed much more occupied by the two women than by the Christ.

" A delicate odor of incense, flowers and perfume pervaded the whole house. One felt at home there. This really was a comfortable home, where one would like to linger.

" When we had returned to the parlor I deli-

cately broached the matter of price. Madame Samoris, lowering her eyes, asked for fifty thousand francs.

" Then she added: ' If you wish to see it again, Monsieur, I very seldom go out before three o'clock; and I can be found at home every day.'

" In the street the stranger asked me details about the Baroness, whom he had found charming. But I did not hear anything more from either of them.

" Three months passed by.

" One morning, hardly two weeks ago, she came here at about lunch time, and, placing a roll of bills in my hand, said: ' My dear, you are an angel! Here are fifty thousand francs; *I* buy your Christ, and I pay twenty thousand francs more for it than the price agreed upon, on condition that you always—always send me clients—for it is still for sale.' "

# FOR SALE

WHAT a pleasure it is to go for a walk just as the sun is rising, to drift along through the dewy fields, along by the sea-shore! What bliss! The sweet light kissing your eyes, the delicately perfumed air entering your nostrils and bathing your whole body in a gentle breeze!

Why do we retain such a sweet remembrance of certain precious minutes spent in communing with Mother Earth—the recollection of receiving a sweet sensation as of a delicate caress imprinted on one's memory at the sight of a picturesque bit of scenery, as though one had been permitted to catch a glimpse of some lovely nymph?

I remember one day when I was tramping along the Brittany coast, toward Cape Finisterre. I was wandering along aimlessly near Quimperlé, in the most picturesque part of

beautiful Brittany. It was one of those spring mornings which make one younger by twenty years, which give one the hopes and dreams of youth.

I was following a path along the sea, by the wheat fields. The fields were still, and the water was as quiet as a mill-pond. The sweet odor of the sea and of ripening crops was everywhere. I was following my fancy along the coast, in a journey which had begun two weeks before. I felt strong, nimble, happy and free from care.

My thoughts were nowhere! Why should one think in those hours of unconscious joy, of the joy as of an animal running around in the grass, or flying through the blue skies? In the distance I could hear the sound of singing voices. As it was Sunday, I thought it might perhaps be a religious procession, but as I turned a sharp bend in the path I stood motionless, spellbound. Five large fishing-smacks appeared before me filled with men, women and children, who were going to high mass at Plouneven. They were drifting along the coast, gently propelled by a soft breeze which just filled the sails. Those heavy vessels were gliding along gently, loaded with passengers; and all those people were chanting. The deep voices of the men, standing by the rails, their heads covered by their quaint hats, mingled with the shriller voices of the women and the high, flute-like notes of the children. The passengers of the five boats were chanting the same hymn, whose monotonous rhythm traveled clearly through the calm air. The five boats were sailing one behind the other, very close together. They passed in front of me, close to me, and as they disappeared I heard the singing grow fainter and fainter.

I began to dream the dreams of youth, in a childish yet charming manner. How quickly this age of

dreams disappears, the happiest time of our life! We are never lonely or sad, never morose or disappointed, when within we feel the divine gift of being able to lose ourselves in fond hopes as soon as alone. What a fairyland is the land where everything can happen in the flights of fancy! How beautiful, life under the tinsel of dreams!

Alas! all that is over now!

I began to dream. What of? Of everything which one is expecting, of everything for which one is hoping, of fortune, of glory, of woman.

I was walking along quickly, running my hand through the golden wheat-stalks which bent under my fingers and tickled my skin. As I turned to investigate a little headland, I noticed, at the bottom of a narrow crescent-shaped beach, a white house, built on three terraces which descended to the sand.

Why did the sight of this house make me start with joy? How should I know? Sometimes in wandering around in this manner we see little nooks which we seem to have known for years, they look so familiar and pleasing to the sight. May we not have lived there in years gone by? Everything is alluring, tempting, the faint line of the horizon, the massive trees, the golden sand.

How pretty the house looked on its high terraces, on which great fruit-trees were growing which went down to the water like a giants' stairway!

I stopped, in love with the little house, overwhelmed with a desire to gain possession of it and live there forever!

Going up to the door, my pulse quickened as I noticed on the gate-post a large sign "For Sale."

I felt a thrill of pleasure, as though this house had been offered to me, given to me. Why? I know not.

"For Sale." Then it no longer belonged to anyone; it could belong to anybody, to me, to me! Why this unaccountable sensation of deep joy? I knew that I was not going to buy it! How could I have paid for it? But it was for sale! The bird in the cage belongs to his master, the bird in the air belongs to me, being the property of no one else.

I went into the garden. What an alluring garden, with its fruit trees and fruit walls, its flower beds, and the two old fig trees at the edge of each terrace! When I had reached the last one, I turned around and looked over the sea. The little beach stretched at my feet, curved and sandy; it was cut off from the open by a natural jetty, which closed the entrance to it, and acted as a breakwater as the waves rolled in from the sea on a stormy day.

On the opposing neck of land two enormous stones, one standing, the other lying in the grass, a *menhir* and a *dolmen,* seemed to stand watch over the little house which they had seen built. For centuries they had known this little bay, once deserted; they would still be there when the little house crumbled and disappeared.

Oh, emblems of times gone by, how I do love you!

I rang the bell as though I had been at home. A kindly-looking little old woman, with a white cap on and clad in a black dress, opened the door for me. It seemed as though I had always known her.

I said: "You are not from Brittany yourself, are you?"

She answered: "No, sir, I am from Lorraine." Then she added: "Do you come to visit the house?"

"That's what I should like to do."

I entered. I seemed to recognize everything—the walls, the furniture. I was even surprised not to see my canes standing near the door. I went into the

parlor, a pretty little room covered with straw matting, and with three large windows looking out over the sea. On the mantelpiece stood a couple of vases and a large photograph of a woman. I immediately went toward it, persuaded that I should recognize that also. And I did, although I was certain that I had never met her. It was she, the one for whom I had waited, whom I desired, for whom I called, whose face haunted my dreams. It was she, the one for whom we are always searching everywhere, the one whom we expect to see in the street, or on the country road as soon as we see a red parasol amid the wheat-fields, the one whom we expect to find in the hotel which we enter on a journey, or on the train which we are about to take, or in the parlor when the door opens before us.

It was she, undoubtedly she! I recognized her eyes, which were looking into mine, her soft wavy hair, and her mouth especially, with its sweet smile, of which I had so often dreamed.

I immediately asked: "Who is this woman?"

The old lady answered dryly: "It is Madame."

"Your mistress?" I asked.

She answered in her quiet manner: "Oh, no, sir."

Taking a chair, I sat down and said: "Tell me about it."

She stood motionless, surprised, silent.

I insisted: "Is she the owner of the house?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Well, to whom *does* the house belong?"

"To my master, Monsieur Tournelle."

Pointing to the photograph, I asked:

"Who is that woman?"

"That is Madame."

"Monsieur's wife?"

" Oh, no, sir."

" His mistress, then? "

Getting no answer, I asked, torn by a queer kind of jealousy, of confused anger against the man who had found this woman:

" Where are they now? "

She murmured: " Monsieur is in Paris, but as for Madame—I don't know where *she* is."

I started: " Then they are no longer together."

" No, sir."

I was sly, and in a solemn voice I said: " Tell me what has happened; I may perhaps be able to be of some service to your master. I know that woman; she is a bad lot! "

The old servant looked at me, and encouraged by my open and frank appearance, she confided in me:

" Oh! she made my master so unhappy. He met her in Italy and brought her back with him. She was a beautiful singer. It was pitiful to see the way Monsieur loved her. They were traveling around this neighborhood last year, when they saw this house, which had been built by a crazy man who wanted to be at least two leagues away from the village. Madame wanted to buy it immediately and stay in it with my master. He bought the house to please her. They lived here all last summer and most of the winter. One morning, just before breakfast, Monsieur called me: ' Césarine, has Madame returned? '

" ' No, sir.'

" We waited for her all day. He was raving. We searched for her everywhere, but she was not to be found. She had disappeared, no one knows where or how."

Oh, what joy filled me! I could have kissed the

old woman. I felt like taking her in my arms and dancing around the parlor.

So she had gone, she had fled, she had left, tired and disgusted with this man! How happy I felt!

The old lady continued: "Monsieur became despondent, and he went back to Paris, leaving me here with my husband, to sell the house. The price is twenty thousand francs."

But I was no longer listening! I was thinking of her! And suddenly it seemed as though I need only start out again in order to find her. She must have come back in the neighborhood, this spring, to see the house, her dear little house, which she would have loved so dearly without him.

I dropped ten francs in the old servant's hand, seized the photograph, and ran away fondly kissing the dear image. I reached the road and started to walk with my eyes fixed on *her*. What luck that she should be free, that she should have left him! I would surely meet her to-day or to-morrow, this week or the next, since she had left him! She had left him because *my* time had come! She was somewhere in this world! I needed only to find her, since I already knew her.

And once more running my hands through the nodding heads of ripe wheat, I drank in the sea air and felt the sun kiss my cheeks. I went on and on, bewildered with joy, intoxicated with hope. I went on, sure that I would soon meet her and bring her back once more to live in the pretty little house "*For Sale.*" How happy she would be this time!

# THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

HE was dead—the head of a high tribunal, the upright magistrate, whose irreproachable life was a proverb in all the courts of France. Advocates, young counselors, judges had saluted at sight of his large, thin, pale face lighted up by two sparkling deep-set eyes, bowing low in token of respect.

He had passed his life in pursuing crime and in protecting the weak. Swindlers and murderers had no more redoubtable enemy, for he seemed to read the most secret thoughts of their minds.

He was dead, now, at the age of eighty-two, honored by the homage and followed by the regrets of a whole people. Soldiers in red trousers had escorted him to the tomb, and men in white cravats had spoken words and shed tears that seemed to be sincere beside his grave.

But here is the strange paper found by the dismayed notary in the desk where he had kept the records of great criminals! It was entitled:

WHY?

20*th June,* 1851. I have just 'eft court. I have condemned Blondel to death! Now, why did this man kill his five children? Frequently one meets with people to whom the destruction of life is a pleasure. Yes, yes, it should be a pleasure, the great-

est of all, perhaps, for is not killing the next thing to creating? To make and to destroy! These two words contain the history of the universe, all the history of worlds, all that is, all! Why is it not intoxicating to kill?

25*th June*. To think that a being is there who lives, who walks, who runs. A being? What is a being? That animated thing, that bears in it the principle of motion, and a will ruling that motion. It is attached to nothing, this thing. Its feet do not belong to the ground. It is a grain of life that moves on the earth, and this grain of life, coming I know not whence, one can destroy at one's will. Then nothing—nothing more. It perishes, it is finished.

26*th June*. Why, then, is it a crime to kill? Yes, why? On the contrary, it is the law of nature. The mission of every being is to kill; he kills to live, and he lives to kill. The beast kills without ceasing, all day, every instant of his existence. Man kills without ceasing, to nourish himself; but since he needs besides to kill for pleasure, he has invented hunting! The child kills the insects he finds, the little birds, all the little animals that come in his way. But this does not suffice for the irresistible need to massacre that is in us. It is not enough to kill beasts; we must kill man too. Long ago this need was satisfied by human sacrifices. Now, the necessity of social life has made murder a crime. We condemn and punish the assassin! But, as we cannot live without yielding to this natural and imperious instinct of death, we relieve ourselves, from time to time, by wars. Then a whole nation slaughters another nation. It is a feast of blood, a feast that maddens armies, and that intoxicates civilians, women and children, who read, by lamplight at night, the feverish story of massacre.

One might suppose that those destined to accomplish these butcheries of men should be despised! No, they are loaded with honors. They are clad in gold and in resplendent garments; they wear plumes on their heads and ornaments on their breasts; and they are given crosses, rewards, titles of every kind. They are proud, respected, loved by women, cheered by the crowd, solely because their mission is to shed human blood! They drag through the streets their instruments of death, that the passer-by, clad in black, looks on with envy. For to kill is the great law set by nature in the heart of existence! There is nothing more beautiful and honorable than killing!

30*th June.* To kill is the law, because nature loves eternal youth. She seems to cry in all her unconscious acts: "Quick! quick! quick!" The more she destroys, the more she renews herself.

2*d July.* A human being—what is a human being? Through thought it is a reflection of all that is; through memory and science it is an abridged edition of the universe whose history it represents; a mirror of things and of actions, each human being becomes a microcosm in the macrocosm.

3*d July.* It must be a pleasure, unique and full of zest, to kill; to have there before one, the living, thinking being; to make therein a little hole, nothing but a little hole, to see that red thing flow which is the blood, which makes life; and to have before one only a heap of limp flesh, cold, inert, void of thought!

5*th August.* I, who have passed my life in judging, condemning, killing by the spoken word, killing by the guillotine those who had killed by the knife, I, I, if I should do as all the assassins have done, whom I have smitten, I, I—who would know it?

10*th August.* Who would ever know? Who would ever suspect me, me, me, especially if I should

choose a being I had no interest in doing away with?

15*th August.* The temptation has come to me. It pervades my whole being; my hands tremble with the desire to kill.

22*d August.* I could resist no longer. I killed a little creature as an experiment, for a beginning. Jean, my servant, had a goldfinch in a cage hung in the office window. I sent him on an errand, and I took the little bird in my hand, in my hand where I felt its heart beat. It was warm. I went up to my room. From time to time I squeezed it tighter; its heart beat faster; this was atrocious and delicious. I was near choking it. But I could not see the blood.

Then I took scissors, short nail scissors, and I cut its throat with three slits, quite gently. It opened its bill, it struggled to escape me, but I held it, oh! I held it—I could have held a mad dog—and I saw the blood trickle.

And then I did as assassins do—real ones. I washed the scissors, I washed my hands. I sprinkled water, and took the body, the corpse, to the garden to hide it. I buried it under a strawberry-plant. It will never be found. Every day I shall eat a strawberry from that plant. How one can enjoy life, when one knows how!

My servant cried; he thought his bird flown. How could he suspect me? Ah! ah!

25*th August.* I must kill a man! I must!

30*th August.* It is done. But what a little thing! I had gone for a walk in the forest of Vernes. I was thinking of nothing, literally nothing. A child was in the road, a little child eating a slice of bread and butter.

He stops to see me pass and says, "Good-day, Monsieur President."

And the thought enters my head: "Shall I kill him?"

I answer: "You are alone, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"All alone in the wood?"

"Yes, sir."

The wish to kill him intoxicated me like wine. I approached him quite softly, persuaded that he was going to run away. And, suddenly, I seized him by the throat. He looked at me with terror in his eyes—such eyes! He held my wrists in his little hands, and his body writhed like a feather over the fire. Then he moved no more. I threw the body in the ditch, and some weeds on top of it. I returned home, and dined well. What a little thing it was! In the evening, I was very gay, light, rejuvenated; I passed the evening at the Prefect's. They found me witty. But I have not seen blood! I am tranquil.

31*st August*. The body has been discovered. They are hunting for the assassin. Ah! ah!

1*st September*. Two tramps have been arrested. Proofs are lacking.

2*d September*. The parents have been to see me. They wept! Ah! ah!

6*th October*. Nothing has been discovered. Some strolling vagabond must have done the deed. Ah! ah! If I had seen the blood flow, it seems to me I should be tranquil now! The desire to kill is in my blood; it is like the passion of youth at twenty.

20*th October*. Yet another. I was walking by the river, after breakfast. And I saw, under a willow, a fisherman asleep. It was noon. A spade was standing in a potato-field near by, as if expressly for me.

I took it. I returned; I raised it like a club, and with one blow of the edge I cleft the fisherman's head. Oh! he bled, this one! Rose-colored blood. It flowed into the water, quite gently. And I went

away with a grave step. If I had been seen! Ah! ah! I should have made an excellent assassin.

25*th October*. The affair of the fisherman makes a great stir. His nephew, who fished with him, is charged with the murder.

26*th October*. The examining magistrate affirms that the nephew is guilty. Everybody in town believes it. Ah! ah!

27*th October*. The nephew makes a very poor witness. He had gone to the village to buy bread and cheese, he declared. He swore that his uncle had been killed in his absence! Who would believe him?

28*th October*. The nephew has all but confessed, they have badgered him so. Ah! ah! Justice!

15*th November*. There are overwhelming proofs against the nephew, who was his uncle's heir. I shall preside at the sessions.

25*th January*. To death! to death! to death! I have had him condemned to death! Ah! ah! The advocate-general spoke like an angel! Ah! ah! Yet another! I shall go to see him executed!

10*th March*. It is done. They guillotined him this morning. He died very well! very well! That gave me pleasure! How fine it is to see a man's head cut off!

Now, I shall wait, I can wait. It would take such a little thing to let myself be caught.

* * * * * * *

The manuscript contained yet other pages, but without relating any new crime.

Alienist physicians to whom the awful story has been submitted declare that there are in the world many undiscovered madmen, as adroit and as much to be feared as this monstrous lunatic.

## ROSE

THE two young women appear to be buried under a blanket of flowers. They are alone in the immense landau, which is filled with flowers like a giant basket. On the front seat are two small hampers of white satin filled with violets, and on the bearskin by which their knees are covered there is a mass of roses, mimosas, daisies, tuberoses and orange blossoms, interwoven with silk ribbon; the two frail bodies seem buried under this beautiful perfumed bed, which hides everything but the shoulders and arms and a little of the dainty waists.

The coachman's whip is wound with a garland of anemones, the horses' traces are quilted with carnations, the spokes of the wheels are clothed in mignonette, and where the lanterns ought to be are two enormous round bouquets which look as though they were the eyes of this strange, rolling, flower-bedecked beast.

The landau drives rapidly along the road, through the Rue d'Antibes, preceded, followed, accompanied, by a crowd of other carriages covered with flowers, full of women almost out of sight under an ocean of violets. It is the flower carnival at Cannes.

The carriage reaches the Boulevard de la Foncière, where the battle is waged. All along the immense avenue a double row of flower-bedecked vehicles are going and coming like an endless ribbon. Flowers are thrown from one to the other. They pass through the air like balls, striking fresh faces, bouncing and falling into the dust, where an army of youngsters pick them up.

A thick crowd is standing on the sidewalks, and held in check by the mounted police, who pass brutally along pushing back the curious ones as though to prevent the common people from mingling with the rich.

In the carriages, people call to each other, recognize each other and bombard each other with roses. A chariot full of pretty women, dressed in red as devils, attracts the eyes of all. A gentleman, who looks like the portraits of Henry IV, is throwing an immense bouquet which is held back by an elastic. Fearing the shock, the women hide their eyes and the men lower their heads, but the graceful, rapid and obedient missile describes a curve and returns to its master, who immediately throws it at some new face.

The two young women start emptying their arsenal by the handful, and receive a perfect hail of flowers; then, after an hour of the battle, a little tired, they tell the coachman to drive along the road which follows the seashore.

The sun disappears behind Esterel, outlining the

dark, rugged mountain against the fiery sky. The clear blue sea, as calm as a mill-pond, stretches out as far as the horizon, where it mingles with the sky; and the fleet, anchored in the middle of the bay, looks like a herd of enormous beasts, motionless on the water, apocalyptic animals, armored and hump-backed, their frail masts looking like feathers, and with eyes which light up when evening approaches.

The two young women, resting easily under the heavy robes, look out lazily over the blue expanse of water. At last one of them says:

"How delightful the evenings are! How good everything seems! Don't you think so, Margot?"

Her companion answers:

"Yes, it is good. But nothing is ever quite complete."

"What is missing? I feel perfectly happy. I don't need anything else."

"Yes, you do. You are not thinking of it. Whatever sensation of delight may fill our bodies, we always long for something more—for the heart."

The other asked with a smile:

"A little love?"

"Yes."

They stopped talking, their eyes fastened on the distant horizon, then the one called Margot murmured: "Life without that seems to me unbearable. I need being loved, if only by a dog. But we are all the same, no matter what you may say, Simone."

"Not at all, my dear. I had rather not be loved at all than to be loved by the first comer. Do you think, for instance, that it would be pleasant to be loved by—by——"

She was looking for someone by whom she could be loved, glancing over the whole vast country. Her eyes, after traveling around the horizon, fell on the

two bright buttons which were shining on the back of the coachman's livery, and she continued, laughing—" by my coachman? "

Madame Margot barely smiled, and said in a low tone of voice:

" I assure you that it is very amusing to be loved by a servant. It has happened to me two or three times. They roll their eyes in such a funny manner —it's enough to make you die laughing! Naturally, the more in love they are, the more severe one must be with them, and then, some day, for some reason, you dismiss them, because, otherwise, if anyone should notice it, you would appear so ridiculous."

Madame Simone was listening, her looks lost in the distance, then she declared:

" No, I'm afraid that my footman's heart would not satisfy me. Tell me how you noticed that they loved you."

" I noticed it the same way that I do with other men—when they get stupid."

" The others don't seem stupid to me, when they love me."

" They are idiots, my dear, unable to talk, to answer, to understand anything."

" But how did you feel when you were loved by a servant? Were you—moved—flattered? "

" Moved? no; flattered—yes, a little. One is always flattered to be loved by a man, no matter who he may be."

" Oh, Margot! "

" Yes, indeed, my dear! For instance, I will tell you of a peculiar incident which happened to me. You will see how clear and complex our emotions are, in such cases.

" About four years ago I happened to be without a maid. I had tried five or six, one right after the

other, and I was about ready to give up in despair when I read, in a newspaper, an advertisement of a young girl knowing how to cook, embroider, dress hair, who was looking for a position and who could furnish the best of references. Besides all these accomplishments, she could speak English.

" I wrote to the given address, and the next day the person in question presented herself. She was tall, slender, pale, shy-looking. She had beautiful black eyes and a charming complexion; she pleased me immediately. I asked for her certificates; she gave me one in English, for she came, as she said, from Lady Rymwell's, where she had been for ten years.

" The certificate showed that the young girl had left of her own free will, in order to return to France, and the only thing with which they had had to find fault during her long period of service was a little French coquettishness.

" This prudish English phrase even made me smile a bit, and I immediately engaged this maid.

" She came to me the same day. Her name was Rose.

" At the end of a month I would have been helpless without her. She was a find, a pearl, a phenomenon.

" She could dress my hair with infinite taste; she could trim a hat better than most milliners, and she could even make my dresses.

" I was astonished at her accomplishments. I had never before been waited on in such a manner.

" She dressed me rapidly and with a surprisingly light touch. I never felt her fingers on my skin, and nothing is so disagreeable to me as contact with a servant's hand. I soon developed habits of excessive laziness, it was so pleasant to be dressed from

head to foot, and from chemise to gloves, by this tall, timid girl, always blushing a little, and never saying a word. After my bath she would rub and massage me while I dozed a little on my couch; I almost considered her more of a friend than a servant.

" One morning the janitor asked, mysteriously, to speak to me. I was surprised, and told him to come in. He was a good, faithful man, an old soldier, one of my husband's former orderlies.

" He seemed to be embarrassed by what he had to say to me. At last he managed to mumble:

" ' Madame, the superintendent of police is down-stairs.'

" I asked quickly:

" ' What does he wish? '

" ' He wishes to search the house.'

" Of course the police are useful, but I hate them. I do not think that it is a noble profession. I answered, angered and hurt:

" ' Why this search? For what reason? He shall not come in.'

The janitor continued:

" ' He claims that there is a criminal hidden in the house.'

" This time I was frightened and I told him to bring the inspector to me, so that I might get some explanation. He was a man with good manners and decorated with the Legion of Honor. He begged my pardon for disturbing me, and then informed me that I had, among my domestics, a convict.

" I was shocked; and I answered that I could guarantee every servant in the house, and I began to enumerate them.

" ' The janitor, Pierre Courtin, an old soldier.'

" ' It's not he.'

" ' A stable-boy, son of a farmer whom I know, and a groom whom you have just seen.'

"'It's not he.'

"'Then, Monsieur, you see that you must be mistaken.'

"'Excuse me, Madame, but I am positive that I am not making a mistake. As the conviction of a notable criminal is at stake, would you be so kind as to call all your people before us.'

"At first I refused, but I finally gave in, and called everybody, men and women.

"The inspector glanced at them and then declared:

"'This isn't all.'

"'Excuse me, Monsieur, there is no one left but my maid, a young girl whom you could not possibly mistake for a convict.'

"He asked:

"'May I also see her?'

"'Certainly.'

"I rang for Rose, who immediately appeared. She had hardly entered the room, when the inspector made a motion, and two men whom I had not seen, hidden behind the door, jumped on her, seized her and tied her hands behind her back.

I cried out in anger and tried to rush forward to defend her. The inspector stopped me:

"'This girl, Madame, is a man whose name is Jean Nicolas Lecapet, condemned to death in 1879 for assaulting a woman and injuring her so that death resulted. His sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. He escaped four months ago. We have been looking for him ever since.'

"I was terrified, bewildered. I did not believe the thing at all. The commissioner continued, laughing:

"'I can prove it to you. His right arm is tattooed.'

" The sleeve was rolled up. It was true. The inspector added, with bad taste:

" ' You can trust us for the other proofs.'

" And they led my maid away!

" Well, would you believe me, the thing that moved me most was not anger at having thus been played upon, deceived and made ridiculous, it was not the shame of having thus been dressed and undressed, handled and touched by this man—but a—deep humiliation—a woman's humiliation. Do you understand? "

" I am afraid I don't."

" Just think—this man had been condemned for —for assaulting a woman. Well! I thought—of the one whom he had assaulted—and—and I felt humiliated—there! Do you understand now? "

Madame Margot did not answer. She was looking straight ahead, her eyes fastened on the two shining buttons of the livery, with that sphinx-like smile which women sometimes have.

# A FAMILY AFFAIR

THE small engine attached to the Neuilly steam-tram whistled as it passed the Porte Maillot to warn all obstacles to get out of its way and puffed like a person out of breath as it sent out its steam, its pistons moving rapidly with a noise as of iron legs running. The train was going along the broad avenue that ends at the Seine. The sultry heat at the close of a July day lay over the whole city, and from the road, although there was not a breath of wind stirring, there arose a white, chalky, suffocating, warm dust, which adhered to the moist skin, filled the eyes, and got into the lungs. People stood in the doorways of their houses, trying to get a breath of air.

The windows of the steam-tram were open and the curtains fluttered in the wind. There were very few passengers inside, because on warm days people preferred the outside or the platforms. They consisted of stout women in peculiar costumes, of those shopkeepers' wives from the suburbs, who made up for the distinguished looks which they did not possess by ill-assumed dignity; of men tired from office-work, with yellow faces, stooped shoulders, and with one shoulder higher than the other, in con-

sequence of their long hours of writing at a desk. Their uneasy and melancholy faces also spoke of domestic troubles, of constant want of money, disappointed hopes; for they all belonged to the army of poor, threadbare devils who vegetate economically in cheap, plastered houses, with a tiny piece of neglected garden on the outskirts of Paris, in the midst of those fields where night soil is deposited.

A short, corpulent man, with a puffy face, dressed all in black, and wearing a decoration in his button-hole, was talking to a tall, thin man, dressed in a dirty, white linen suit, the coat all unbuttoned, with a white Panama hat on his head. The former spoke so slowly and hesitatingly, that it occasionally almost seemed as if he stammered; he was Monsieur Caravan, chief clerk in the Admiralty. The other, who had formerly been surgeon on board a merchant ship, had set up in practice in Courbevoie, where he applied the vague remnants of medical knowledge which he had retained after an adventurous life to the wretched population of that district. His name was Chenet, and strange rumors were current as to his morality.

Monsieur Caravan had always led the normal life of a man in a Government office. For the last thirty years he had invariably gone the same way to his office every morning, and had met the same men going to business at the same time and nearly on the same spot, and he returned home every evening by the same road, and again met the same faces which he had seen growing old. Every morning, after buying his penny paper at the corner of the Faubourg Saint Honoré, he bought two rolls, and then he went into his office, like a culprit who is giving himself up to justice, and got to his desk as quickly as possible, always feeling uneasy, as though he were expecting a

rebuke for some neglect of duty of which he might have been guilty.

Nothing had ever occurred to change the monotonous order of his existence, for no event affected him except the work of his office, perquisites, gratuities, and promotion. He never spoke of anything but of his duties, either at the Admiralty or at home, for he had married the portionless daughter of one of his colleagues. His mind, which was in a state of atrophy from his depressing daily work, had no other thoughts, hopes or dreams than such as related to the office, and there was a constant source of bitterness that spoilt every pleasure that he might have had, and that was the employment of so many naval officials, "tinsmiths," as they were called because of their silver-lace, as first-class clerks; and every evening at dinner he discussed the matter hotly with his wife, who shared his angry feelings, and proved to their own satisfaction that it was in every way unjust to give places in Paris to men who ought properly to have been employed in the navy.

He was old now, and had scarcely noticed how his life was passing, for school had merely been exchanged for the office without any intermediate transition, and the ushers, at whom he had formerly trembled, were replaced by his chiefs, of whom he was terribly afraid. When he had to go into the rooms of these official despots, it made him tremble from head to foot, and that constant fear had given him a very awkward manner in their presence, a humble demeanor, and a kind of nervous stammering.

He knew nothing more about Paris than a blind man might know, who was led to the same spot by his dog every day; and if he read the account of any uncommon events, or scandals, in his penny paper,

they appeared to him like fantastic tales, which some pressman had made up out of his own head, in order to amuse the inferior *employés*. He did not read the political news, which his paper frequently altered, as the cause which subsidized it might require, for he was not fond of innovations, and when he went through the Avenue of the Champs-Elysées every evening, he looked at the surging crowd of pedestrians, and at the stream of carriages, as a traveler might who has lost his way in a strange country.

As he had completed his thirty years of obligatory service that year, on the first of January, he had had the cross of the Legion of Honor bestowed upon him, which, in the semi-military public offices, is a recompense for the miserable slavery—the official phrase is "loyal services"—of unfortunate convicts who are riveted to their desk. That unexpected dignity gave him a high and new idea of his own capacities, and altogether changed him. He immediately left off wearing light trousers and fancy waistcoats, and wore black trousers and long coats, on which his ribbon which was very broad, showed off better. He got shaved every morning, manicured his nails more carefully, changed his linen every two days, from a legitimate sense of what was proper, and out of respect of the national Order, of which he formed a part; and from that day he was another Caravan, scrupulously clean, majestic, and condescending.

At home, he said, " my cross," at every moment, and he had become so proud of it that he could not bear to see men wearing any other ribbon in their button-holes. He became especially angry on seeing strange orders—" which nobody ought to be allowed to wear in France;" and he bore Chenet a particular grudge, as he met him on a tram-car

every evening, wearing a decoration of one kind or another, white, blue, orange, or green.

The conversation of the two men, from the Arc de Triomphe to Neuilly, was always the same, and on that day they discussed, first of all, various local abuses, which disgusted them both, and the Mayor of Neuilly received his full share of their censure. Then, as invariably happens in the company of a medical man, Caravan began to enlarge on the chapter of illness, as, in that manner, he hoped to obtain a little gratuitous advice, if he was careful not to show his hand. His mother had been causing him no little anxiety for some time; she had frequent and prolonged fainting fits, and, although she was ninety, she would not take care of herself.

Caravan grew quite tender-hearted when he mentioned her great age, and more than once asked Doctor Chenet, emphasizing the word *doctor*—although he was not fully qualified, being only an *officier de santé*—whether he had often met anyone as old as that. And he rubbed his hands with pleasure; not, perhaps, that he cared very much about seeing the good woman last for ever here on earth, but because the long duration of his mother's life was, as it were, an earnest of old age for himself, and he continued:

"In my family, we last long, and I am sure that, unless I meet with an accident, I shall not die until I am very old."

The doctor looked at him with pity, and glanced for a moment at his neighbor's red face, his short, thick neck, his "corporation," as Chenet called it to himself, his two fat, flabby legs, and the apoplectic rotundity of the old official; and, raising the white Panama hat from his head, he said with a snigger:

"I am not so sure of that, old fellow; your

mother is as tough as nails, but I should say that your life is not a very good one."

This rather upset Caravan, who did not speak again until the tram put them down at their destination, where the two friends got out, and Chenet asked his friend to have a glass of vermouth at the Café du Globe, opposite, which both of them were in the habit of frequenting. The proprietor, who was a friend of theirs, held out to them two fingers, which they shook across the bottles on the counter; and then they joined three of their friends, who were playing dominoes, and who had been there since mid-day. They exchanged cordial greetings, with the usual question:—"Anything new?" And then the three players continued their game, and held out their hands without looking up, when the others wished them "Good-night;" after which, both went home to dinner.

Caravan lived in a small two-story house in Courbevoie, near where the roads meet; the ground floor was occupied by a hair-dresser. Two bedrooms, a dining-room and a kitchen, formed the whole of their apartments, and Madame Caravan spent nearly her whole time in cleaning them up, while her daughter, Marie-Louise, who was twelve, and her son, Philippe-Auguste, were running about with all the little, dirty, mischievous brats of the neighborhood, and playing in the gutter.

Caravan had installed his mother, whose avarice was notorious in the neighborhood, and who was terribly thin, in the room above them. She was always cross, and she never passed a day without quarreling and flying into furious tempers. She would apostrophize the neighbors, who were standing at their own doors, the coster-mongers, the street-sweepers, and the street-boys, in the most violent

language; and the latter, to have their revenge, used to follow her at a distance when she went out, and call out rude things after her.

A little servant from Normandy, who was incredibly giddy and thoughtless, performed the household work, and slept on the second floor in the same room as the old woman, for fear of anything happening to her in the night.

When Caravan got in, his wife, who suffered from a chronic passion for cleaning, was polishing up the mahogany chairs that were scattered about the room, with a piece of flannel. She always wore cotton gloves, and adorned her head with a cap ornamented with many colored ribbons, which was always tilted over one ear; and whenever anyone caught her polishing, sweeping, or washing, she used to say:

"I am not rich; everything is very simple in my house, but cleanliness is my luxury, and that is worth quite as much as any other."

As she was gifted with sound, obstinate, practical common sense, she led her husband in everything. Every evening during dinner, and afterward, when they were in their room, they talked over the business of the office for a long time, and although she was twenty years younger than he was, he confided everything to her as if she took the lead, and followed her advice in every matter.

She had never been pretty, and now she had grown ugly; in addition to that, she was short and thin, while her careless and tasteless way of dressing herself concealed her few small feminine attractions, which might have been brought out if she had possessed any taste in dress. Her skirts were always awry, and she frequently scratched herself, no matter on what part of her person, totally indifferent as to who might see her, and so persistently

that anyone who saw her might think that she was suffering from something like the itch. The only adornments that she allowed herself were silk ribbons, which she had in great profusion, and of various colors mixed together, in the pretentious caps which she wore at home.

As soon as she saw her husband she rose and said, as she kissed his whiskers:

"Did you remember Potin, my dear?"

He fell into a chair, in consternation, for that was the fourth time on which he had forgotten a commission that he had promised to do for her.

"It is a fatality," he said; "it is no good for me to think of it all day long, for I am sure to forget it in the evening."

But as he seemed really so very sorry, she merely said, quietly:

"You will think of it to-morrow, I daresay. Anything new at the office?"

"Yes, a great piece of news; another tinsmith has been appointed second chief clerk." She became very serious, and said:

"So he succeeds Ramon; this was the very post that I wanted you to have. And what about Ramon?"

"He retires on his pension."

She became furious, her cap slid down on her shoulder, and she continued:

"There is nothing more to be done in that shop now. And what is the name of the new commissioner?"

"Bonassot."

She took up the *Naval Year Book,* which she always kept close at hand, and looked him up.

"'Bonassot—Toulon. Born in 1851. Student-Commissioner in 1871. Sub-Commissioner in 1875.'

Has he been to sea?" she continued. At that question Caravan's looks cleared up, and he laughed until his sides shook.

"As much as Balin—as much as Balin, his chief." And he added an old office joke, and laughed more than ever:

"It would not even do to send them by water to inspect the Point-du-Jour, for they would be sick on the penny steamboats on the Seine."

But she remained as serious as if she had not heard him, and then she said in a low voice, as she scratched her chin:

"If we only had a deputy to fall back upon. When the Chamber hears everything that is going on at the Admiralty, the Minister will be turned out . . ."

She was interrupted by a terrible noise on the stairs. Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who had just come in from the gutter, were slapping each other all the way upstairs. Their mother rushed at them furiously, and taking each of them by an arm, she dragged them into the room, shaking them vigorously; but as soon as they saw their father, they rushed up to him, and he kissed them affectionately, and taking one of them on each knee, began to talk to them.

Philippe-Auguste was an ugly, ill-kempt little brat, dirty from head to foot, with the face of an idiot, and Marie-Louise was already like her mother —spoke like her, repeated her words, and even imitated her movements. She also asked him whether there was anything fresh at the office, and he replied merrily:

"Your friend, Ramon, who comes and dines here every Sunday, is going to leave us, little one. There is a new second head-clerk."

She looked at her father, and with a precocious child's pity, she said:

"Another man has been put over your head again!"

He stopped laughing, and did not reply, and in order to create a diversion, he said, addressing his wife, who was cleaning the windows:

"How is mamma, upstairs?"

Madame Caravan left off rubbing, turned round, pulled her cap up, as it had fallen quite on to her back, and said, with trembling lips:

"Ah! yes; let us talk about your mother, for she has made a pretty scene. Just imagine: a short time ago Madame Lebaudin, the hairdresser's wife, came upstairs to borrow a packet of starch of me, and, as I was not at home, your mother chased her out as though she were a beggar; but I gave it to the old woman. She pretended not to hear, as she always does when one tells her unpleasant truths, but she is no more deaf than I am, as you know. It is all a sham, and the proof of it is that she went up to her own room immediately, without saying a word."

Caravan, embarrassed, did not utter a word, and at that moment the little servant came in to announce dinner. In order to let his mother know, he took a broom-handle, which always stood in a corner, and rapped loudly on the ceiling three times, and then they went into the dining-room. Madame Caravan, junior, helped the soup, and waited for the old woman, but she did not come, and as the soup was getting cold, they began to eat slowly, and when their plates were empty, they waited again, and Madame Caravan, who was furious, attacked her husband:

"She does it on purpose, you know that as well as I do. But you always uphold her."

Not knowing which side to take, he sent Marie-

Louise to fetch her grandmother, and he sat motionless, with his eyes cast down, while his wife tapped her glass angrily with her knife. In about a minute, the door flew open suddenly, and the child came in again, out of breath and very pale, and said hurriedly:

"Grandmamma has fallen on the floor."

Caravan jumped up, threw his table-napkin down, and rushed upstairs, while his wife, who thought it was some trick of her mother-in-law's, followed more slowly, shrugging her shoulders, as if to express her doubt. When they got upstairs, however, they found the old woman lying at full length in the middle of the room, and when they turned her over, they saw that she was insensible and motionless, while her skin looked more wrinkled and yellow than usual, her eyes were closed, her teeth clenched, and her thin body was stiff.

Caravan knelt down by her, and began to moan:

"My poor mother! my poor mother!" he said. But the other Madame Caravan said:

"Bah! She has only fainted again, that is all, and she has done it to prevent us from dining comfortably, you may be sure of that."

They put her on the bed, undressed her completely, and Caravan, his wife, and the servant began to rub her; but, in spite of their efforts, she did not recover consciousness, so they sent Rosalie, the servant, to fetch Doctor Chenet. He lived a long way off, on the quay going towards Suresnes, and so it was a considerable time before he arrived. He came at last, however, and, after having looked at the old woman, felt her pulse, and listened for a heart-beat, he said:—"It is all over."

Caravan threw himself on the body, sobbing

violently; he kissed his mother's rigid face, and wept so, that great tears fell on the dead woman's face, like drops of water, and, naturally, Madame Caravan, junior, showed a decorous amount of grief, and uttered feeble moans, as she stood behind her husband, while she rubbed her eyes vigorously.

But, suddenly, Caravan raised himself up, with his thin hair in disorder, and, looking very ugly in his grief, said:

"But . . . are you sure, doctor? . . . Are you quite sure? . . ."

The doctor stooped over the body, and, handling it with professional dexterity, as a shopkeeper might do, when showing off his goods, he said:

"See, my dear friend, look at her eye."

He raised the eyelid, and the old woman's eye appeared altogether unaltered, unless, perhaps, the pupil was rather larger, and Caravan felt a severe shock at the sight. Then Monsieur Chenet took her thin arm, forced the fingers open, and said, angrily, as if he had been contradicted:

"Just look at her hand; I never make a mistake, you may be quite sure of that."

Caravan fell on the bed, and almost bellowed, while his wife, still whimpering, did what was necessary.

She brought the night-table, on which she spread a towel and placed four wax candles on it, which she lighted; then she took a sprig of box, which was hanging over the chimney glass, and put it between the four candles, in a plate, which she filled with clean water, as she had no holy water. But, after a moment's rapid reflection, she threw a pinch of salt into the water, no doubt, thinking she was performing some sort of act of consecration by doing that,

and when she had finished, she remained standing motionless, and the doctor, who had been helping her, whispered to her:

"We must take Caravan away."

She nodded assent, and, going up to her husband, who was still on his knees, sobbing, she raised him up by one arm, while Chenet took him by the other.

They put him into a chair, and his wife kissed his forehead, and then began to lecture him. Chenet enforced her words, and preached firmness, courage, and resignation—the very things which are always wanting in such overwhelming misfortunes—and then both of them took him by the arms again and led him out.

He was crying like a great child, with convulsive sobs; his arms hanging down, and his legs weak, and he went downstairs without knowing what he was doing, and moving his feet mechanically. They put him into the chair which he always occupied at dinner, in front of his empty soup plate. And there he sat, without moving, his eyes fixed on his glass, and so stupefied with grief that he could not even think.

In a corner, Madame Caravan was talking with the doctor and asking what the necessary formalities were, as she wanted to obtain practical information. At last, Monsieur Chenet, who appeared to be waiting for something, took up his hat and prepared to go, saying that he had not dined yet; whereupon, she exclaimed:

"What! you have not dined? Why, stay here, doctor; don't go. You shall have whatever we have, for, of course, you understand that we do not fare sumptuously." He made excuses and refused, but she persisted, and said:

"You really must stay; at times like this, people

like to have friends near them, and, besides that, perhaps you will be able to persuade my husband to take some nourishment; he must keep up his strength."

The doctor bowed, and, putting down his hat, he said:

"In that case, I will accept your invitation, Madame."

She gave Rosalie, who seemed to have lost her head, some orders, and then sat down, "to pretend to eat," as she said, "to keep the doctor company."

The soup was brought in again, and Monsieur Chenet took two helpings. Then there came a dish of tripe, which exhaled a smell of onions, and which Madame Caravan made up her mind to taste.

"It is excellent," the doctor said, at which she smiled, and, turning to her husband, she said:

"Do take a little, my poor Alfred, only just to put something into your stomach. Remember that you have got to pass the night watching by her!"

He held out his plate, docilely, just as he would have gone to bed, if he had been told to, obeying her in everything, without resistance and without reflection, and he ate; the doctor helped himself three times, while Madame Caravan, from time to time, fished out a large piece at the end of her fork, and swallowed it with a sort of studied indifference.

When a salad bowl full of macaroni was brought in, the doctor said:

"By Jove! That is what I am very fond of." And this time Madame Caravan helped everybody. She even filled the saucers that were being scraped by the children, who, being left to themselves, had been drinking wine without any water, and were now kicking each other under the table.

Chenet remembered that Rossini, the composer,

had been very fond of that Italian dish, and suddenly he exclaimed:

"Why! that rhymes, and one could begin some lines like this:

*The Maestro Rossini*
*Was fond of macaroni.*"

Nobody listened to him, however. Madame Caravan, who had suddenly grown thoughtful, was thinking of all the probable consequences of the event, while her husband made bread pellets, which he put on the table-cloth, and looked at with a fixed, idiotic stare. As he was devoured by thirst, he was continually raising his glass full of wine to his lips, and the consequence was that his mind, which had been upset by the shock and grief, seemed to become vague, and his ideas danced about as digestion commenced.

The doctor, who, meanwhile, had been drinking away steadily, was getting visibly drunk, and Madame Caravan herself felt the reaction which follows all nervous shocks, and was agitated and excited, and although she had drunk nothing but water, she felt her head rather confused.

Presently, Chenet began to relate stories of deaths, that appeared funny to him. For in that suburb of Paris, that is full of people from the provinces, one finds that indifference toward death which all peasants show, were it even their own father or mother; that want of respect, that unconscious brutality which is so common in the country, and so rare in Paris, and he said:

"Why, I was sent for last week to the Rue du Puteaux, and when I went, I found the patient dead, and the whole family calmly sitting beside the bed finishing a bottle of aniseed cordial, which had been bought the night before to satisfy the dying man's fancy."

But Madame Caravan was not listening; she was continually thinking of the inheritance, and Caravan was incapable of understanding anything further.

Coffee was presently served, and it had been made very strong to give them courage. As every cup was well flavored with cognac, it made all their faces red, and confused their ideas still more. To make matters still worse, Chenet suddenly seized the brandy bottle and poured out "a drop for each of them just to wash their mouths out with," as he termed it, and then, without speaking any more, overcome in spite of themselves, by that feeling of animal comfort which alchohol affords after dinner, they slowly sipped the sweet cognac, which formed a yellowish syrup at the bottom of their cups.

The children had fallen asleep, and Rosalie carried them off to bed. Caravan, mechanically obeying that wish to forget oneself which possesses all unhappy persons, helped himself to brandy again several times, and his dull eyes grew bright. At last the doctor rose to go, and seizing his friend's arm, he said:

"Come with me; a little fresh air will do you good. When one is in trouble, one must not remain in one spot."

The other obeyed mechanically, put on his hat, took his stick, and went out, and both of them walked arm-in-arm towards the Seine, in the starlight night.

The air was warm and sweet, for all the gardens in the neighborhood were full of flowers at that season of the year, and their fragrance, which is scarcely perceptible during the day, seemed to awaken at the approach of night, and mingled with the light breezes which blew upon them in the darkness.

The broad avenue, with its two rows of gas-

lamps, that extended as far as the Arc de Triomphe, was deserted and silent, but there was the distant roar of Paris, which seemed to have a reddish vapor hanging over it. It was a kind of continual rumbling, which was at times answered by the whistle of a train at full speed, in the distance, traveling to the ocean, through the provinces.

The fresh air on the faces of the two men rather overcame them at first, made the doctor lose his equilibrium a little, and increased Caravan's giddiness, from which he had suffered since dinner. He walked as if he were in a dream; his thoughts were paralyzed, although he felt no great grief, for he was in a state of mental torpor that prevented him from suffering, and he even felt a sense of relief which was increased by the mildness of the night.

When they reached the bridge, they turned to the right, and got the fresh breeze from the river, which rolled along, calm and melancholy, bordered by tall poplar trees, while the stars looked as if they were floating on the water and were moving with the current. A slight, white mist that floated over the opposite banks, filled their lungs with a sensation of cold, and Caravan stopped suddenly, for he was struck by that smell from the water, which brought back old memories to his mind. For, in his mind, he suddenly saw his mother again, in Picardy, as he had seen her years before, kneeling in front of their door, and washing the heaps of linen at her side, in the stream that ran through their garden. He almost fancied that he could hear the sound of the wooden paddle with which she beat the linen in the calm silence of the country, and her voice, as she called out to him: "Alfred, bring me some soap." And he smelt that odor of running water, of the mist rising from the wet ground, that marshy smell, which

he should never forget, and which came back to him on this very evening on which his mother died.

He stopped, seized with a feeling of despair. A sudden flash seemed to reveal to him the extent of his calamity, and that breath from the river plunged him into an abyss of hopeless grief. His life seemed cut in half, his youth disappeared, swallowed up by that death. All the former days were over and done with, all the recollections of his youth had been swept away; for the future, there would be nobody to talk to him of what had happened in days gone by, of the people he had known of old, of his own part of the country, and of his past life; that was a part of his existence which existed no longer, and the rest might as well end now.

And then he saw " the mother " as she was when young, wearing well-worn dresses, which he remembered for such a long time that they seemed inseparable from her; he recollected her movements, the different tones of her voice, her habits, her predilections, her fits of anger, the wrinkles on her face, the movements of her thin fingers, and all her well-known attitudes, which she would never have again, and clutching hold of the doctor, he began to moan and weep. His thin legs began to tremble, his whole, stout body was shaken by his sobs, all he could say was:

" My mother, my poor mother, my poor mother! . . ."

But his companion, who was still drunk, and who intended to finish the evening in certain places of bad repute that he frequented secretly, made him sit down on the grass by the riverside, and left him almost immediately, under the pretext that he had to see a patient.

Caravan went on crying for some time, and when

he had got to the end of his tears, when his grief had, so to say, run out, he again felt relief, repose, and sudden tranquillity.

The moon had risen, and bathed the horizon in its soft light.

The tall poplar trees had a silvery sheen on them, and the mist on the plain looked like drifting snow; the river, in which the stars were reflected, and which had a sheen as of mother-of-pearl, was gently rippled by the wind. The air was soft and sweet, and Caravan inhaled it almost greedily, and thought that he could perceive a feeling of freshness, of calm and of superhuman consolation pervading him.

He actually resisted that feeling of comfort and relief, and kept on saying to himself: "My mother, my poor mother!" . . . and tried to make himself cry, from a kind of conscientious feeling; but he could not succeed in doing so any longer and those sad thoughts, which had made him sob so bitterly a short time before, had almost passed away. In a few moments, he rose to go home, and returned slowly, under the influence of that serene night, and with a heart soothed in spite of himself.

When he reached the bridge, he saw that the last tramcar was ready to start, and behind it were the brightly lighted windows of the Café du Globe. He felt a longing to tell somebody of his loss, to excite pity, to make himself interesting. He put on a woeful face, pushed open the door, and went up to the counter, where the landlord still was. He had counted on creating a sensation, and had hoped that everybody would get up and come to him with outstreched hands, and say: "Why, what is the matter with you?" But nobody noticed his disconsolate face, so he rested his two elbows on the counter, and, burying his face in his hands, he murmured: "Good heavens! Good heavens!"

The landlord looked at him and said: "Are you ill, Monsieur Caravan?"

"No, my friend," he replied, "but my mother has just died."

"Ah!" the other exclaimed, and as a customer at the other end of the establishment asked for a glass of Bavarian beer, he went to attend to him, leaving Caravan almost stupefied at his want of sympathy.

The three domino players were sitting at the same table which they had occupied before dinner, totally absorbed in their game, and Caravan went up to them, in search of pity, but as none of them appeared to notice him, he made up his mind to speak.

"A great misfortune has happened to me since I was here," he said.

All three slightly raised their heads at the same instant, but keeping their eyes fixed on the pieces which they held in their hands.

"What do you say?"

"My mother has just died;" whereupon one of them said:

"Oh! the devil!" with that false air of sorrow which indifferent people assume. Another, who could not find anything to say, emitted a sort of sympathetic whistle, shaking his head at the same time, and the third turned to the game again, as if he were saying to himself: "Is that all?"

Caravan had expected some of those expressions that are said to "come from the heart," and when he saw how his news was received, he left the table, indignant at their calmness at their friend's sorrow, although this sorrow had stupefied him so that he scarcely felt it any longer. When he got home his wife was waiting for him in her nightgown, and sit-

ting in a low chair by the open window, still thinking of the inheritance.

"Undress yourself," she said; "we can go on talking."

He raised his head, and looking at the ceiling, said:

"But . . . there is nobody upstairs."

"I beg your pardon, Rosalie is with her, and you can go and take her place at three o'clock in the morning, when you have had some sleep."

He only partially undressed, however, so as to be ready for anything that might happen, and after tying a silk handkerchief round his head, he lay down to rest, and for some time neither of them spoke. Madame Caravan was thinking.

Her nightcap was adorned with a red bow, and was pushed rather over one ear, as was the way with all the caps she wore, and presently she turned toward him and said:

"Do you know whether your mother made a will?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I . . . I do not think so. . . . No, I am sure that she did not."

His wife looked at him, and she said, in a low, angry tone:

"I call that infamous; here we have been wearing ourselves out for ten years in looking after her, and have boarded and lodged her! Your sister would not have done so much for her, nor I either, if I had known how I was to be rewarded! Yes, it is a disgrace to her memory! I daresay that you will tell me that she paid us, but one cannot pay one's children in ready money for what they do; that obligation is recognized after death; at any rate, that is how honorable people act. So I have had all my

worry and trouble for nothing! Oh, that is nice! that is very nice!"

Poor Caravan, who was almost distracted, kept on repeating:

"My dear, my dear, please, please be quiet."

She grew calmer by degrees, and, resuming her usual voice and manner, she continued:

"We must let your sister know to-morrow."

He started, and said:

"Of course, we must; I had forgotten all about it; I will send her a telegram the first thing in the morning."

"No," she replied, like a woman who had foreseen everything; "no, do not send it before ten or eleven o'clock, so that we may have time to turn round before she comes. It does not take more than two hours to get here from Charenton, and we can say that you lost your head from grief. If we let her know in the course of the day, that will be soon enough, and will give us time to look round."

Caravan put his hand to his forehead, and, in the same timid voice in which he always spoke of his chief, the very thought of whom made him tremble, he said:

"I must let them know at the office."

"Why?" she replied. "On such occasions like this, it is always excusable to forget. Take my advice, and don't let him know; your chief will not be able to say anything to you, and you will put him in a nice fix."

"Oh! yes, that I shall, and he will be in a terrible rage, too, when he notices my absence. Yes, you are right; it is a capital idea, and when I tell him that my mother is dead, he will be obliged to hold his tongue."

And he rubbed his hands in delight at the joke,

when he thought of his chief's face; while upstairs lay the body of the dead old woman, with the servant asleep beside it.

But Madame Caravan grew thoughtful, as if she were preoccupied by something, which she did not care to mention, and at last she said:

"Your mother had given you her clock, had she not; the girl playing at cup and ball?"

He thought for a moment, and then replied:

"Yes, yes; she said to me (but it was a long time ago, when she first came here): 'I shall leave the clock to you, if you look after me well.'"

Madame Caravan was reassured, and regained her serenity, and said:

"Well, then, you must go and fetch it out of her room, for if we get your sister here she will prevent us from taking it."

He hesitated.

"Do you think so? . . ."

That made her angry.

"I certainly think so; once it is in our possession, she will know nothing at all about where it came from; it belongs to us. It is just the same with the chest of drawers with the marble top that is in her room; she gave it me one day when she was in a good temper. We will bring it down at the same time."

Caravan, however, seemed incredulous, and said:

"But, my dear, it is a great responsibility!"

She turned on him furiously.

"Oh! Indeed! Will you never change? You would let your children die of hunger, rather than make a move. Does not that chest of drawers belong to us, as she gave it to me? And if your sister is not satisfied, let her tell me so, me! I don't care a straw

for your sister. Come, get up, and we will bring down what your mother gave us mmediately."

Trembling and vanquished, he got out of bed, and began to put on his trousers, but she stopped him:

"It is not worth while to dress yourself; your underwear is quite enough; I mean to go as I am."

They both left the room in their night clothes, went upstairs quite noiselessly, opened the door and went into the room, where the four lighted tapers and the plate with the sprig of box alone seemed to be watching the old woman in her rigid repose; for Rosalie, who was lying back in the easy chair with her legs stretched out, her hands folded in her lap, and her head on one side, was also quite motionless, and was snoring with her mouth wide open.

Caravan took the clock, which was one of those grotesque objects that were produced so plentifully under the Empire. A girl in gilt bronze was holding a cup and ball, and the ball formed the pendulum.

"Give that to me," his wife said, "and take the marble slab off the chest of drawers."

He put the marble slab on his shoulder with considerable effort, and they left the room. Caravan had to stoop in the doorway, and trembled as he went down-stairs, while his wife walked backward, so as to light him, and held the candlestick in one hand, carrying the clock under the other arm.

When they were in their own room, she heaved a sigh.

"We have got over the worst part of the job," she said; "so now let us go and fetch the other things."

But the bureau drawers were full of the old woman's wearing apparel, which they must manage to hide somewhere, and Madame Caravan soon thought of a plan.

"Go and get that wooden packing-case in the vestibule; it is hardly worth anything, and we may just as well put it here."

And when he had brought it upstairs, they began to fill it. One by one, they took out all the collars, cuffs, chemises, caps, all the well-worn things that had belonged to the poor woman lying there behind them, and arranged them methodically in the wooden box, in such a manner as to deceive Madame Braux, the deceased woman's other child, who would be coming the next day.

When they had finished, they first of all carried the bureau drawers down-stairs, and the remaining portion afterward, each of them holding an end, and it was some time before they could make up their minds where it would stand best; but at last they decided upon their own room, opposite the bed, between the two windows, and as soon as it was in its place, Madame Caravan filled it with her own things. The clock was placed on the chimney-piece in the dining-room; they looked to see what the effect was, and were both delighted with it, and agreed that nothing could be better. Then they retired, she blew out the candle, and soon everybody in the house was asleep.

It was broad daylight when Caravan opened his eyes again. His mind was rather confused when he woke up, and he did not clearly remember what had happened, for a few minutes; when he did, he felt a weight at his heart, and jumped out of bed, almost ready to cry again.

He hastened to the room overhead, where Rosalie was still sleeping in the same position as the night before, not having awakened once. He sent her to do her work, put fresh tapers in the place of those that had burnt out, and then he looked at his mother,

revolving in his brain those apparently profound thoughts, those religious and philosophical commonplaces, which trouble people of mediocre intelligence in the presence of death.

But as his wife was calling him, he went downstairs. She had written out a list of what had to be done during the morning, and he was horrified when he saw the memorandum:

1. Report the death at the Mayor's office.
2. See the doctor who had attended her.
3. Order the coffin.
4. Give notice at the church.
5. Go to the undertaker.
6. Order the notices of her death at the printer's.
7. Go to the lawyer.
8. Telegraph the news to all the family.

Besides all this, there were a number of small commissions; so he took his hat and went out. As the news had spread abroad, Madame Caravan's female friends and neighbors soon began to come in, and begged to be allowed to see the body. There had been a scene between husband and wife at the hairdresser's on the ground floor, about the matter, while a customer was being shaved. The wife, who was knitting steadily, said: "Well, there is one less, and as great a miser as one ever meets with. I certainly did not care for her; but, nevertheless, I must go and have a look at her."

The husband, while lathering his customer's chin, said: "That is another queer fancy! Nobody but a woman would think of such a thing. It is not enough for them to worry you during life, but they cannot even leave you at peace when you are dead." But his wife, without being in the least disconcerted, replied: "The feeling is stronger than I am, and

I must go. It has been on me since the morning. If I were not to see her, I should think about it all my life; but when I have had a good look at her, I shall be satisfied."

The knight of the razor shrugged his shoulders, and remarked in a low voice to the gentleman whose cheek he was scraping: "I just ask you, what sort of ideas do you think these confounded females have? I should not amuse myself by going to see a corpse!" But his wife had heard him, and replied very quietly: "But it is so, it is so." And then, putting her knitting on the counter, she went upstairs, to the first floor, where she met two other neighbors, who had just come, and who were discussing the event with Madame Caravan, who was giving them the details; and they all went together to the death chamber. The four women went in softly, and, one after the other, sprinkled the bedclothes with holy water, knelt, and made the sign of the cross while they mumbled a prayer. Then they rose from their knees, and looked for some time at the corpse, with round wide-open eyes and mouths partly open, while the daughter-in-law of the dead woman, with her handkerchief to her face, pretended to be sobbing piteously.

When she turned about to walk away, whom should she perceive standing close to the door but Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, who were curiously taking note of all that was going on. Then forgetting her pretended grief, she threw herself upon them with uplifted hands, crying out in a furious voice, "Will you get out of this, you filthy brats?"

Ten minutes later, going upstairs again with another contingent of neighbors, she prayed, wept profusely, performed all her duties, and found once

more her two children, who had followed her upstairs. She again boxed their ears soundly; but the next time she paid no heed to them, and at each fresh arrival of visitors the two urchins always followed in the wake, kneeling down in a corner, and imitating slavishly everything they saw their mother do.

When the afternoon came, the crowds of inquisitive people began to diminish, and soon there were no more visitors. Madame Caravan, returning to her own apartments, began to make the necessary preparations for the funeral ceremony, and the deceased was left alone.

The window of the room was open. A torrid heat entered along with clouds of dust; the flames of the four candles were flickering beside the immobile corpse; and upon the cloth which covered the face, the closed eyes, the two stretched-out hands, small flies alighted, came, went, and careered up and down incessantly, being the only companions of the old woman for the time being.

Marie-Louise and Philippe-Auguste, however, had now left the house, and were running up and down the street. They were soon surrounded by their playmates, by little girls, especially, who were older and who were much more interested in all the mysteries of life, asking questions as if they were grown people.

"Then your grandmother is dead?"—"Yes, she died yesterday evening."—"What does a dead person look like?"

Then Marie began to explain, telling all about the candles, the sprig of box, and the face of the corpse. It was not long before great curiosity was aroused in the minds of all the children, and they asked to be allowed to go upstairs to look at the departed.

Marie-Louise at once organized a first expedition, consisting of five girls and two boys—the biggest and the most courageous. She made them take off their shoes so that they might not be discovered. The troop filed into the house and mounted the stairs as stealthily as an army of mice.

Once in the chamber, the little girl, imitating her mother, regulated the ceremony. She solemnly walked in advance of her comrades, went down on her knees, made the sign of the cross, moved her lips as in prayer, rose, sprinkled the holy water, and while the children, all crowded together, were approaching—frightened and curious, and eager to look at the face and hands of the deceased—she began suddenly to simulate sobbing, and to bury her eyes in her little handkerchief. Then, becoming instantly consoled, on thinking of the other children who were downstairs waiting at the door, she ran downstairs followed by the rest, returning in a minute with another group, then a third; for all the little ragamuffins of the country-side, even to the little beggars in rags, had congregated in order to participate in this new pleasure; and each time she repeated her mother's grimaces with absolute perfection.

At length, however, she became tired. Some game or other drew the children away from the house, and the old grandmother was left alone, forgotten suddenly by everybody.

The room was growing dark, and upon the dry and rigid features of the corpse, the fitful flames of the candles cast patches of light.

Towards eight o'clock, Caravan went to the chamber of death, closed the windows, and renewed the candles. He was now quite composed on entering the room, accustomed already to regard the corpse as though it had been there for months. He

even went the length of declaring that, as yet, there were no signs of decomposition, making this remark just at the moment when he and his wife were about to sit down at table. "Pshaw!" she responded, "she is now in wood; she will keep for a year."

The soup was eaten in silence. The children, who had been left to themselves all day, now worn out by fatigue, were sleeping soundly on their chairs, and nobody ventured to break the silence.

Suddenly the flame of the lamp went down. Madame Caravan immediately turned up the wick, a hollow sound ensued, and the light went out. They had forgotten to buy oil. To send for it now to the grocer's would keep back the dinner, and they began to look for candles; but none were to be found except the tapers which had been placed upon the table upstairs, in the death chamber.

Madame Caravan, always prompt in her decisions, quickly despatched Marie-Louise to fetch two, and her return was awaited in total darkness.

The footsteps of the girl who had ascended the stairs were distinctly heard. There was silence for a few seconds, and then the child descended precipitately. She threw open the door, and in a choking voice murmured: "Oh! papa, grandmamma is dressing herself!"

Caravan bounded to his feet with such precipitance that his chair fell over against the wall. He stammered out: "You say? . . . What are you saying?"

But Marie-Louise, gasping with emotion, repeated: "Grand . . . grand . . . grandmamma is putting on her clothes, she is coming down stairs."

Caravan rushed boldly up the staircase, followed by his wife, dumfounded; but he came to a stand-

still before the door of the second floor, overcome with terror, not daring to enter. What was he about to see? Madame Caravan, more courageous, turned the handle of the door and stepped forward into the room.

The room seemed to have become darker, and in the middle of it, a tall emaciated figure moved about. The old woman was standing up, and in awakening from her lethargic sleep, before even regaining full consciousness, in turning upon her side, and raising herself on her elbow, she had extinguished three of the candles which burned near the bed. Then, gaining strength, she got off the bed and began to look for her clothes. The absence of her chest of drawers had at first worried her, but, after a little, she had succeeded in finding her things at the bottom of the wooden box, and was now quietly dressing. She emptied the plateful of water, replaced the sprig of box behind the looking-glass, and arranged the chairs in their places, and was ready to go downstairs when there appeared before her her son and daughter-in-law.

Caravan rushed forward, seized her by the hands, embraced her with tears in his eyes, while his wife, who was behind him, repeated in a hypocritical tone of voice: "Oh, what a blessing! Oh, what a blessing!"

But the old woman, without being at all moved, without even appearing to understand, rigid as a statue, and with glazed eyes, simply asked: "Will the dinner soon be ready?"

He stammered out, not knowing what he said:

"O, yes, mother, we have been waiting for you."

And with an alacrity, unusual in him, he took her arm, while Madame Caravan, the younger, seized the candle and lighted them downstairs, walking

backward in front of them, step by step, just as she had done the previous night for her husband, who was carrying the marble.

On reaching the first floor, she almost ran against people who were ascending the stairs. It was the Charenton family, Madame Braux, followed by her husband.

The wife, tall and stout, with a prominent stomach, opened wide her terrified eyes, and was ready to make her escape. The husband, a socialist shoemaker, a little hairy man, the perfect image of a monkey, murmured, quite unconcerned: "Well, what next? Is she resurrected?"

As soon as Madame Caravan recognized them, she made despairing signs to them, then, speaking aloud, she said: "Why, here you are! What a pleasant surprise!"

But Madame Braux, dumfounded, understood nothing; she responded in a low voice: "It was your telegram that brought us; we thought that all was over."

He husband, who was behind her, pinched her to make her keep silent. He added with a sly laugh, which his thick beard concealed: "It was very kind of you to invite us here. We set out post haste;" which remark showed the hostility which had for a long time reigned between the households. Then, just as the old woman reached the last steps, he pushed forward quickly and rubbed his hairy face against her cheeks, shouting in her ear, on account of her deafness: "How well you look, mother; sturdy as usual, hey!"

Madame Braux, in her stupefaction at seeing the old woman alive, whom they all believed to be dead, dared not even embrace her; and her enormous bulk blocked up the passage-way and hindered the others

from advancing. The old woman, uneasy and suspicious, but without speaking, looked at everyone around her; and her little gray eyes, piercing and hard, fixed themselves now on one and now on the other, and they were so full of meaning that the children became frightened.

Caravan, to explain matters said: "She has been somewhat ill, but she is better now; quite well, indeed, are you not, mother?"

Then the good woman, continuing to walk, replied in a husky voice, as though it came from a distance: "It was syncope. I heard you all the while."

An embarrassing silence followed. They entered the dining-room, and in a few minutes all sat down to an improvised dinner.

Only M. Braux had retained his self-possession; his gorilla features grinned wickedly, while he let fall some words of double meaning which painfully disconcerted everyone.

But the door-bell kept ringing every second; and Rosalie, distracted, came to call Caravan, who rushed out, throwing down his napkin. His brother-in-law even asked him whether it was not one of his reception days, to which he stammered out, in answer: "No, only a few packages; nothing more."

A parcel was brought in, which he began to open, carelessly, and the mourning announcements with black borders appeared unexpectedly. Reddening up to the very eyes, he closed the package hurriedly, and pushed it under his waistcoat.

His mother had not seen it! She was looking intently at her clock which stood on the mantel-piece, and the embarrassment increased in midst of a dead silence. Turning her wrinkled face towards her daughter, the old woman, in whose eyes gleamed malice, said: "On Monday you must take me away

from here, so that I can see your little girl. I want so much to see her." Madame Braux, her features illuminated, exclaimed: "Yes, mother, that I will," while Madame Caravan, the younger, who had turned pale, endured the most excruciating agony. The two men, however, gradually drifted into conversation, and soon became embroiled in a political discussion. Braux maintained the most revolutionary and communistic doctrines, his eyes glowing, and gesticulating and throwing about his arms. "Property, sir," he said, "is a robbery perpetrated on the working classes; the land is the common property of every man; hereditary rights are an infamy and a disgrace." But, here, he suddenly stopped, looking as if he had just said something foolish; then, added, in softer tones: "But this is not the proper moment to discuss such things."

The door was opened, and Doctor Chenet appeared. For a moment he seemed bewildered, but regaining his usual smirking expression of countenance, he jauntily approached the old woman, and said: "Aha! mamma, you are better to-day. Oh! I never had any doubt but you would come round again; in fact, I said to myself as I was mounting the staircase, 'I have an idea that I shall find the old lady on her feet once more';" and as he patted her gently on the back: "Ah! she is as solid as the Pont-Neuf; she will bury us all: see if she does not."

He sat down, accepted the coffee that was offered him, and soon began to join in the conversation of the two men; backing up Braux, for he himself had been mixed up in the Commune.

The old woman now feeling herself fatigued, wished to retire. Caravan rushed forward. She looked him steadily in the eye and said: "You, you, must carry my clock and chest of drawers up-

stairs again without a moment's delay." "Yes, mamma," he replied, gasping; "yes, I will do so." The old woman then took the arm of her daughter and withdrew from the room. The two Caravans remained astounded, silent, plunged in the deepest despair, while Braux rubbed his hands and sipped his coffee, gleefully.

Suddenly Madame Caravan, consumed with rage, rushed at him, exclaiming: "You are a thief, a footpad, a cur. I would spit in your face, if . . . I would . . . I . . . would . . ." She could find nothing further to say, suffocating as she was, with rage, while he went on sipping his coffee, with a smile.

His wife returning just then, Madame Caravan attacked her sister-in-law, and the two women—the one with her enormous bulk, the other, epileptic and spare, with changed voices and trembling hands—flew at one another with words of abuse.

Chenet and Braux now interposed, and the later taking his better half by the shoulders pushed her out of the door before him, shouting: "Go on, you slut! you talk too much;" and the two were heard in the street quarreling until they disappeared from sight.

M. Chenet also took his departure, leaving the Caravans alone, face to face. The husband fell back on his chair, and with the cold sweat standing out in beads on his temples, murmured: "What shall I say to my chief to-morrow?"

# COCO

THROUGHOUT the whole countryside the Lucas farm was known as *the* farm. No one knew why. The peasants doubtless attached to this particle " the " a meaning of wealth and of splendor, for this farm was undoubtedly the largest, richest and the best managed in the whole neighborhood.

The immense court, surrounded by five rows of magnificent trees, which sheltered the delicate apple trees from the harsh wind of the plain, inclosed in its confines long brick buildings used for storing fodder and grain, beautiful stables built of hard stones and made to accommodate thirty horses, and a red brick residence which looked like a little château.

Thanks for the good care taken, the dung-heaps were as little offensive as such things can be; the watch-dogs lived in kennels and countless poultry paraded through the tall grass.

Every day, at noon, fifteen persons, masters, farm-hands and the women-folk, seated themselves around the long kitchen table where the soup was brought in steaming in a large, blue-flowered bowl.

The beasts—horses, cows, pigs and sheep—were fat, well fed and clean. Maître Lucas, a tall man who was getting stout, would go around three times a day, overseeing everything and thinking of everything.

A very old white horse, which the mistress wished to keep until its natural death, because she had brought it up and had always used it, and also because it recalled many happy memories, was housed, through sheer kindness of heart, at the back of the stable.

A young scamp about fifteen years old, Isidore Duval by name, and called, for convenience, Zidore, took care of this invalid, gave him his measure of oats and fodder in winter, and, in summer, he was supposed to change his pasturing place four times a day, so that he might have plenty of fresh grass.

The animal, almost crippled, lifted with difficulty his legs, large at the knees and swollen above the hoofs. His hair, which was no longer curried, looked white, and his long eyelashes gave to his eyes a sad expression.

When Zidore took the beast to pasture, he had to pull on the rope with all his might, because it walked so slowly; and the youth, bent over and out of breath, would swear at it, exasperated at having to care for this old nag.

The farm-hands, noticing the young rascal's anger against Coco, were amused and would continually talk of the horse to Zidore, in order to exasperate him. His comrades would make sport with him. In the village he was called Coco-Zidore.

The boy would fume, feeling an unholy desire to revenge himself on the horse. He was a thin, long-legged, dirty child, with thick, coarse, bristly red hair. He seemed only half-witted, and stuttered as though ideas were unable to form in his thick, brute-like mind.

For a long time he had been unable to understand why Coco should be kept, indignant at seeing things wasted on this useless beast. Since the horse could no longer work, it seemed to him unjust that he should be fed; he revolted at the idea of wasting oats, oats which were so expensive, on this paralyzed old plug. And often, in spite of the orders of Maître Lucas, he would economize on the nag's food, only giving him half measure. Hatred grew in his confused, childlike mind, the hatred of a stingy, underhanded, fierce, brutal and cowardly peasant.

When summer came he had to move the animal around in the pasture. It was far. The rascal, angrier every morning, would start, with his dragging step, across the wheat-fields. The men working in the fields would shout to him, jokingly:

"Hey! Zidore, remember me to Coco."

He would not answer; but on the way he would break off a switch, and, as soon as he had moved the old horse, he would let it begin grazing; then, treacherously sneaking up behind it, he would slash its legs. The animal would try to escape, to kick, to get away from the blows, and run around in a circle about its rope, as though it had been inclosed in a circus ring. And the boy would slash away furiously, running along behind, his teeth clenched in anger.

Then he would go away slowly, without turning

around, while the horse watched him disappear, his ribs sticking out, panting as a result of his unusual exertions. Not until the blue blouse of the young peasant was out of sight would he lower his thin white head to the grass.

As the nights were now warm, Coco was allowed to sleep out of doors, in the field behind the little wood. Zidore alone went to see him.

The child threw stones at him to amuse himself. He would sit down on an embankment about ten feet away and would stay there about half an hour, from time to time throwing a sharp stone at the old plug, which remained tied before his enemy, watching him continually and not daring to eat before he was gone.

This one thought stuck in the mind of the young scamp: "Why feed this horse, which is no longer good for anything?" It seemed to him that this old nag was stealing the food of the others, the goods of man and God, that he was even robbing him, Zidore, who was working.

Then, little by little, each day, the boy began to shorten the length of rope which allowed the horse to graze.

The hungry animal was growing thinner and starving. Too feeble to break his bonds, he would stretch his head out toward the tall, green, tempting grass, so near that he could smell and yet so far that he could not touch it.

But one morning Zidore had an idea: it was, not to move Coco any more. He was tired of walking so far for that old skeleton.

He came, however, in order to taste of his vengeance. The beast watched him anxiously. He did not beat him that day. He walked around him with his hands in his pockets. He even made believe change his place, but he sank the stake in exactly the

same hole, and he went away overjoyed with his invention.

The horse, seeing him leave, neighed to call him back; but the rascal began to run, leaving him alone, entirely alone in his field, well tied down and without a blade of grass within reach.

Starving, he tried to reach the grass which he could touch with the end of his nose. He got on his knees, stretching out his neck and his long, drooling lips. All in vain. The old animal spent the whole day in useless, terrible efforts. The sight of all that green food, which stretched out on all sides of him, served to increase the gnawing pangs of hunger.

The scamp did not return that day. He wandered through the woods in search of nests.

The next day he appeared upon the scene again. Coco, exhausted, had lain down. When he saw the child, he got up, expecting at last to have his place changed.

But the little peasant did not even touch the mallet, which was lying on the ground. He came nearer, looked at the animal, threw at his head a clump of earth which flattened out against the white hair, and he started off again, whistling.

The horse remained standing as long as he could see him; then, knowing that his attempts to reach the near-by grass would be hopeless, he once more lay down on his side and closed his eyes.

The following day Zidore did not come.

When he did come at last, he found Coco still stretched out; he noticed that he was dead.

Then he remained standing, looking at him, pleased with what he had done, surprised that it should already be all over. He touched him with his foot, lifted one of his legs and then let it drop, sat on him and remained there, his eyes fixed on the

grass, thinking of nothing. He returned to the farm, but did not mention the accident, because he wished to wander around at the hours when he used to change the horse about.

He went to see him the next day. At his approach some crows flew away. Countless flies were walking over the body and were buzzing around it.

When he returned home, he announced the event. The animal was so old that nobody was surprised. The master said to two of the men:

"Take your shovels and make a hole where he is."

The men buried the horse at the place where he had died of hunger.

And the grass grew thick, green and vigorous, fed by the poor body.

# RUST

HE had always been an ardent lover of sport. When the shooting season was over in the fields and woods he would go out daily in the marsh lands. He hunted from morning till night, summer and winter, spring and autumn, and all kinds of game. He spoke and dreamed of nothing else and would often say:

"How miserable any man must be who does not care for sport!"

And now that he was past fifty, he was healthy, robust, and vigorous, though rather bald. He kept his mustache trimmed, so that it might not cover his lips, and interfere with his blowing the horn.

He was never called by anything but Monsieur Hector, but his full name was Baron Hector Gontran de Coutelier. He lived in a small manor house which he had inherited, in the midst of the woods; and though he knew all the nobility of the department, and met its male representatives out shooting and hunting, he regularly visited only one family, the Courvilles, who were very pleasant neighbors, and had been friends of his family for centuries. In their house he was liked, and made much of, and he used to say: "If I were not a sportsman, I should like to stay here always."

Monsieur de Courville had been his friend and

comrade from childhood, and lived quietly as a gentleman farmer with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, Monsieur de Darnetot, who had no business, but made a pretext of being devoted to historical studies.

Baron de Coutelier often dined with his friends, as much to boast of the game he had bagged as for any other reason. He told long stories about dogs and ferrets, of which he spoke as if they were persons of note, whom he knew very well. He analyzed them, and explained their thoughts and motives:

"When Médor saw that the corn-crake was leading him such a dance, he said to himself: 'Wait a bit, my friend, we will have a joke.' And then, with a jerk of the head to me, to make me go into the corner of the clover-field, he began to quarter the sloping ground, noisily brushing through the clover to drive the bird into a corner from which it could not escape.

"Everything happened as he had foreseen. Suddenly, the corn-crake found itself on the borders of the clover, and it could not go any further without showing itself; Médor stood and pointed, half-looking round at me, but at a sign from me, he drew up to it, flushed the corn-crake, *bang!* down it came, and Médor, as he brought it to me, wagged his tail, as much as to say: 'How about that, Monsieur Hector?'"

Courville, Darnetot, and the two ladies laughed very heartily at these picturesque descriptions into which the Baron threw his whole heart. He became animated, and gesticulated with his arms, and with his whole body; and when he described the death of anything he had killed, he would laugh uproariously and say:

"Was not that a good shot?"

As soon as the conversation turned on anything else, he left off listening, and hummed a hunting-song, or a few notes to imitate a hunting-horn.

He had only lived to hunt and shoot, and was growing old, without thinking about it, or suspecting it, when a severe attack of rheumatism confined him to his bed for two months, and he nearly died of grief and weariness.

As he kept no female servant, for an old footman did all the cooking, he could not get any hot poultices, nor could he have any delicate little attentions, nor anything that an invalid requires. His gamekeeper was his sick-nurse; and as the servant found the time hang just as heavily on his hands as it did on his master's, he slept nearly all day and all night in an easy chair, while the Baron in his bed was swearing and flying into a rage.

The ladies of the De Courville family came to see him occasionally, and those were hours of calm and comfort for him. They prepared his herb tea, attended to the fire, served him his breakfast daintily, by the side of his bed, and when they were going away, he would say:

"By Jove! You ought to come and stay here altogether," which made them laugh heartily.

When he was getting better, and was able to go out shooting again, he went to dine with his friends one evening; but he was not at all in his usual spirits. He was tormented by one continual fear—that he might have another attack before the season opened; and when he was taking his leave at night, and the women were wrapping him up in a shawl, and tying a silk handkerchief round his neck, which he allowed to be done for the first time in his life, he said in a disconsolate voice:

"If it goes on like this, I shall be done for."

As soon as he had gone, Madame Darnetot said to her mother:

"We ought to try to get the Baron married."

They all raised their hands at the suggestion. How was it that they had never thought of it before? And during all the rest of the evening they discussed the widows whom they knew, and their choice fell on a woman of forty, who was still pretty, fairly rich, very good-tempered and in excellent health, whose name was Madame Berthe Vilers, and, accordingly, she was invited to spend a month at the château. She was very dull at home, and was very glad to come; she was lively and active, and Monsieur de Coutelier took her fancy immediately. She amused herself with him as if he had been a living toy, and spent hours in asking him sly questions about the sentiments of rabbits and the machinations of foxes, and he gravely distinguished between the various ways different animals had of looking at things, and ascribed premeditated plans and subtle arguments to them, just as he did to men of his acquaintance.

The attention she paid him delighted him, and one evening, to show his esteem for her, he asked her to go out shooting with him, which he had never done to any woman before; and the invitation appeared so comical to her that she accepted it.

It was quite an amusement to the family to dress her suitably; everybody offered her something, and she came out in a sort of short riding-skirt with boots and men's breeches, a velvet jacket, which was too tight for her across the chest, and a huntsman's black velvet cap.

The Baron seemed as excited as if he were about to fire his first shot. He minutely explained to her the direction of the wind, and how the different dogs worked. Then he took her into a field, and followed

her as anxiously as a nurse does, when her charge is trying to walk for the first time.

Médor soon began to point, and stopped with his tail out straight, and one paw up, and the Baron, standing behind his pupil, was trembling like a leaf, as he whispered:

"Look out, they are par . . . par . . . partridges." And almost before he had finished, there was a loud *whirr—whirr,* and a covey of birds flew up in the air, with a tremendous noise.

Madame Vilers was startled, shut her eyes, fired off both barrels and staggered at the recoil of the gun; but when she had recovered her self-possession, she saw that the Baron was dancing about like a madman, and that Médor was bringing back the first of the two partridges which she had killed.

From that day, Monsieur de Coutelier was in love with her, and used to say, raising his eyes: "What a woman!" And he would go and see his friends every evening now, and would talk about shooting.

One day, Monsieur de Courville, who was walking part of the way with him, asked him, suddenly:

"Why don't you marry her?"

The Baron was altogether taken by surprise, and said:

"What? I? Marry her? . . . Well . . . really . . ."

And he said no more for a while, but then, suddenly shaking hands with his companion, he said:

"Good-by, my friend," and quickly disappeared in the darkness.

He did not visit them again for three days, but when he did so, he was pale from thinking the matter over, and graver than usual. Taking Monsieur de Courville aside, he said:

"That was a capital idea of yours; try to persuade her to accept me, for one might say that a woman like her was made for me, and you and I shall be able to have some sort of sport together, all the year round."

As Monsieur de Courville felt certain that his friend would not meet with a refusal, he replied:

"Propose to her, immediately, my dear fellow, or would you rather that I did it for you?"

But the Baron grew suddenly nervous, and said, with some hesitation:

"No . . . no . . . I must go to Paris for . . . for a few days. As soon as I come back, I will give you a definite answer." No other explanation was forthcoming, and he started the next morning.

He made a long stay. One, two, three weeks passed, but Monsieur de Coutelier did not return, and the Courvilles, who were surprised and uneasy, did not know what to say to their friend, whom they had informed of the Baron's wishes. Every other day they sent to the house for news of him, but none of his servants had had a line.

But one evening, while Madame Vilers was singing, and accompanying herself on the piano, a servant appeared with a mysterious air, and told Monsieur de Courville that a gentleman wanted to see him. It was the Baron, in a traveling suit. He looked much altered and older, and as soon as he saw his old friend, he seized both his hands, and said, in a somewhat tired voice: "I have just returned, my dear friend, and I have come to you immediately; I am thoroughly exhausted."

Then he hesitated in visible embarrassment, and presently said:

"I wished to tell you . . . immediately

. . . that that business . . . you know what I mean . . . must come to nothing."

Monsieur de Courville looked at him in stupefaction. "Must come to nothing? . . . Why?"

"Oh! Do not ask me, please; it would be too painful for me to tell you; but you may rest assured that I am acting like an honorable man. I cannot . . . I have no right . . . no right, you understand, to marry this lady, and I will wait until she has gone, before coming here again; it would be too painful for me to see her. Good-by." And he fairly ran away.

The whole family deliberated and discussed the matter, surmising a thousand things. The conclusion they came to was, that the Baron's past life concealed some great mystery, that, perhaps, he had natural children, or some *liaison* of long standing. At any rate, the matter seemed serious, and so as to avoid any difficult complications, they adroitly informed Madame Vilers of the state of affairs, and she returned home just as much of a widow as she had come.

Three months passed, when one evening, when he had dined rather too well and was rather unsteady on his legs, Monsieur de Coutelier, who was smoking a pipe with Monsieur de Courville, said to him:

"You would really pity me, if you only knew how continually I am thinking about your friend."

De Courville, who had been rather annoyed at the Baron's behavior in the matter, told him exactly what he though of him:

"By Jove, my good friend, when a man has any secrets in his existence, as you have, he does not at once make advances to a woman, as you did; for you must surely have foreseen that you would have to draw back."

The Baron left off smoking in some confusion.

"Yes and no; at any rate, I could not have guessed at what actually happened."

Whereupon, Monsieur de Courville lost patience, and replied:

"One ought to foresee everything."

But Monsieur de Coutelier replied in a low voice, in case anybody should be listening: "I see that I have hurt your feelings, and will tell you everything, so that you may forgive me. You know that for twenty years, I have lived only for sport; I care for nothing else, and think about nothing else. Consequently, when I was on the point of undertaking certain obligations with regard to this lady, I felt some scruples of conscience. I did not know whether I was still capable of . . . of . . . you know what I mean . . . Just think! It is exactly sixteen years since . . . I for the last time . . . you understand what I mean. In this neighborhood, it is not easy to . . . you know. And then, I had other things to do. I prefer to use my gun, and so before entering into an engagement before the Mayor and the priest to . . . well, I was frightened. I said to myself: 'Confound it; suppose I missed fire!' An honorable man always keeps his engagements, and in this case, I was undertaking sacred duties with regard to this lady, and so, to feel sure, I made up my mind to go and spend a week in Paris.

"At the end of that time, nothing, absolutely occurred. I always lost . . . I waited for a fortnight, three weeks, continually hoping. In the restaurants, I ate a number of highly seasoned dishes, which upset my stomach, and . . . and it was still the same thing . . . or rather, nothing. You will, therefore, understand, that, in such circumstances, and having assured myself of the fact,

the only thing I could do was . . . was . . . to withdraw; and I did so."

Monsieur de Courville had to struggle very hard, not to laugh, and he shook hands with the Baron, saying:

"I am very sorry for you," and accompanied him half-way home.

When he got back, and was alone with his wife, he told her everything, nearly choking with laughter; she, however, did not laugh, but listened very attentively, and when her husband had finished, she said, very seriously:

"The Baron is a fool, my dear; he was frightened, that is all. I will write and ask Berthe to come back here as soon as possible."

And when Monsieur de Courville observed that their friend had made such long and useless attempts, she merely said:

"Nonsense! When a man loves his wife, you know . . . that sort of thing adjusts itself to the situation."

And Monsieur de Courville made no reply, as he felt rather confused himself.

# THE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

HE never would have dreamed of such good fortune! Son of a simple bailiff, Jean Marin had come, like many others, to study law in the Latin Quarter. In the different cafés which he had frequented he had made friends with several loquacious students who wrangled over politics while drinking their beer. He was filled with admiration for them and followed them obstinately from café to café, even paying for the drinks when he had the money.

When he had reached the dignified position of a barrister, he pleaded cases, which he lost. One morning he read in the paper that one of his old friends from the Quarter had been elected to the House.

He once more became his faithful dog, the friend who does the odd jobs, for whom one sends when in need of him and with whom you act just as if you were alone. Somehow or other the deputy became

a Cabinet Minister; six months later Jean Marin was appointed a State Councilor.

First of all, he suffered from a terrible attack of vanity. He would walk through the streets for the pleasure of showing himself, as though people could guess his position just from seeing him. He managed to tell all the store-keepers, the newsboys, even the hack drivers on the slightest provocation:

"I am a State Councilor."

Then, naturally, as a result of his dignity, as a matter of professional necessity, of duty on the part of a powerful and generous man, he felt an uncontrollable need to protect someone. He would offer his aid to everybody, on all occasions, with inexhaustible generosity.

When he met an acquaintance on the street, he would hasten forward with a delighted look, shake hands, inquire about the man's health, and then, without waiting for any questions, he would say:

"You know, I am a State Councilor and always at your service. If I can be useful to you in anything, make use of me freely. In my position, I can do a good deal."

Then he would enter some café with his companion and ask for pen and ink and a sheet of paper: "Just one, waiter; it's to write a letter of recommendation."

How many letters of recommendation he would write—ten, twenty, fifty a day! He would write them at the American Café, at Bignon's, at Tortoni's, at the Maison-Dorée, at the Café Riche, at the English Café, at the Neapolitan—everywhere, everywhere. He wrote them to every official of the Republic, from

judges to ministers. He was happy, perfectly happy.

One morning, as he was leaving his house to go to a meeting of the Council, it began to rain. He was undecided as to whether or not he should take a cab; finally he decided not to take one, and he walked through the streets.

The shower was getting terrible; it was flooding the streets and the sidewalks. M. Marin was forced to take shelter in a doorway. An old, white-haired priest was already there. Before becoming State Councilor, M. Marin did not like the clergy. Now he treated them with the consideration due them, since a cardinal had politely consulted him about a difficult matter. The rain was now pouring down in torrents, compelling the two men to retreat as far as the janitor's booth, in order to avoid being splashed by the passing wagons. M. Marin, who was always itching to talk and to make an impression on people declared:

"This certainly is nasty weather, Monsieur l'Abbé."

The old priest bowed:

"Oh! yes, Monsieur, it is very disagreeable, especially to a stranger, who is in Paris only for a few days."

"Ah! You are from the country?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I am only here for a short stay."

"It must, indeed, be very disagreeable to have rain during the few days which one spends in the capital. We officials who spend the whole year here do not mind it very much."

The priest did not answer. He was watching

the street, where the rain was falling more slowly. Suddenly, making up his mind, he lifted up his cassock just as the women lift up their dresses to cross the street.

M. Marin, seeing him leaving, cried:

"You will get drenched, Monsieur l'Abbé. Wait a few minutes more and it will stop."

The old man, undecided, stopped, and then said:

"You see, I am in a good deal of a hurry. I have a very important engagement."

M. Marin seemed to be greatly distressed:

"But you will be wet to the skin. Might I ask in what direction you are going?"

The priest seemed to hesitate, and then he answered:

"I am going toward the Palais-Royal."

"In that case, Monsieur l'Abbé, allow me to offer you the shelter of my umbrella. I am going to the State Council. I am one of the Councilors."

The old priest pricked up his ears, looked at his neighbor and then said:

"Thank you very much, Monsieur; I accept with pleasure."

Then M. Marin took him by the arm and dragged him along. He directed, watched over and advised him.

"Look out for this puddle, Monsieur l'Abbé. Look out especially for the wheels of the carriages; sometimes they splash you from head to foot. Be very careful of the umbrellas of the people who pass by; there is nothing more dangerous for the eyes. The women especially are most unbearable; they pay attention to nothing and they stick the points of their umbrellas or parasols right into your eyes. They never get out of the way for anybody. One might think that the city belonged to them. They

rule over the sidewalk and the street. For my part, I find that their education has been sadly neglected."

M. Marin began to laugh.

The priest did not answer. He walked bent forward a little, carefully choosing the places where he stepped, so as to get neither his shoes nor his cassock muddy.

M. Marin continued:

"You have probably come to Paris for a little vacation?"

The man answered:

"No, I have some business to do here."

"Ah! Important business? Might I ask what it is? If I could be of any use to you, I would like to place myself at your disposal."

The priest seemed embarrassed. He murmured:

"Oh! it's just a little personal business. A little trouble with—with my bishop. It would not interest you. It's an—an affair of internal complications—of—of—ecclesiastical matters."

M. Marin insisted:

"But it is just the State Council which regulates those matters. In that case, make use of me."

"Yes, Monsieur; it is to the State Council that I am going. You are too kind. I have to see Monsieur Lerepère and Monsieur Savon, and also, perhaps, Monsieur Petitpas."

M. Marin stopped short.

"Why, those are my best friends, Monsieur l'Abbé, my very best friends, excellent colleagues, charitable people! I shall recommend you to the three of them, and warmly too. You may count on me."

The priest overwhelmed him with thanks, stammered excuses and wished him all kinds of blessings.

M. Marin was delighted:

"Ah! you may flatter yourself that you are a mighty lucky man, Monsieur l'Abbé. You see if, thanks to me, your affair doesn't run through smoothly."

They had arrived at the Council. M. Marin brought the priest up to his office, gave him a chair and seated him before the fire, while he sat down and began to write:

"My dear colleague, allow me to recommend to you most warmly a venerable priest, one of the most worthy and most deserving, Monsieur l'Abbé——"

He interrupted himself and asked:

"What is your name, please?"

"Abbé Ceinture."

M. Marin once more started to write:

"M. l'Abbé Ceinture, who needs your good offices for a little matter of which he will speak to you.

"I am happy for this occasion which allows me, my dear colleague——"

And he ended with the usual compliments.

When he had finished the three letters he gave them to his *protégé,* who left, after thanking him in the warmest and most effusive manner.

M. Marin finished his business, returned home, spent the day quietly, slept peacefully, awoke pleased and had the newspapers brought him.

The first one which he opened was a radical sheet. He read:

Our Clergy and our Officials.

When shall we be able to cease calling attention to the misdeeds of the clergy? A certain priest, named Ceinture, convicted of having conspired against the present government, accused of shameful deeds which we shall not even mention, suspected of being a Jesuit metamorphosed into a simple priest, dismissed by a bishop for motives which are said to be unmentionable, and called to Paris in order that

he might furnish explanations for his conduct, has found an ardent champion in a person by the name of Marin, a State Councilor, who did not hesitate to give this becassocked rascal most urgent letters of recommendation to all the officials, his Republican colleagues.

We call the attention of the Minister to the inexcusable conduct of this councilor——

M. Marin jumped out of bed, pulled on his clothes and ran over to see his colleague Petitpas, who said to him:

"What's the matter with you? Are you crazy, that you recommend to me that old plotter?"

M. Marin, bewildered, stammered:

"No—you see—I was deceived. He looked like a worthy man—he deceived me—he basely deceived me. Please have him convicted. I shall write a letter. Tell me to whom I should write, in order to have him convicted. I will go to the district attorney and the Archbishop of Paris—yes, the Archbishop."

Quickly sitting down before M. Petitpas' desk, he wrote:

MONSEIGNEUR—I have the honor of bringing to your very reverend attention the fact that I have been the victim of a certain Abbé Ceinture, who misused my good-will.

Deceived by the protestations of this priest, I.....

Then, when he had signed and sealed the letter, he turned to his colleague and said:

"My friend, let this be a lesson to you—never recommend anybody."

# THE WINDOW

I MET Madame de Jadelle in Paris last winter. She immediately pleased me enormously. But you know her as well as I do . . . no . . . excuse me . . . almost as well as I do. . . . You know how fanciful and poetic she is, with a free and easy manner and an impressionable heart, wilful, emancipated, bold, enterprising, audacious, in short, above all prejudice, and notwithstanding all that, sentimental, delicate, easily offended, tender and modest.

She was a widow, and I adore widows. I therefore thought of getting married and started in to court her. The more I knew her the more she pleased me, and I thought the time right to propose. I was in love with her and was on the way to be too much so. When a man gets married he should not love his wife too much, because then he makes a fool of himself; he becomes at the same time foolish and brutal.

Therefore, one day, putting on my best clothes, I went to her and said: "Madame, I am fortunate enough to love you and I come to ask you if I may

have some hope of pleasing you and of giving you my name."

She answered quietly: "You seem to be in quite a hurry, Monsieur! I haven't the slightest idea how long it will take me to find out whether or not you'll please me, but I am perfectly willing to give you a trial. Physically you seem all right. It remains to be seen whether you are also satisfactory as to heart, character and habits. The majority of the marriages become stormy or criminal because the contracting parties do not know each other well enough.

"Some little habit or some opinion on a question of morals or religion, some disagreeable little fault may make unreconcilable enemies, who will be chained to each other until death, of the tenderest and most passionate lovers. I shall not get married, Monsieur, without knowing fully the character of the man who is to share my life with me. I want to study him from near for months.

"This is what I propose. Come and spend the summer with me at my country house in Lauville and there we will see, quietly, whether we are made for each other.

"I see you smiling! Oh! Monsieur, if I were not sure of myself I would not make such a proposition. But I have such a contempt and disgust for love such as you men understand it that a fall from grace is impossible for me. Do you accept?"

I kissed her hand:

"When do we leave, Madame?"

"Will the tenth of May suit you?"

"Most assuredly."

A month later we were settled. She was really a very peculiar woman. She studied me from morn-

ing until night. As she loved horses, we spent hours each day riding through the woods, talking of everything, for she was trying to penetrate into my inmost thoughts as well as to observe my every action.

As for myself, I was becoming more and more enamored every day and I did not worry in the slightest about any similarity of temperament. I soon noticed that I was under observation even while asleep. Some one was sleeping in a little room beside mine, where they only entered very late and with infinite precautions. This continual spying began to exasperate me. I wished to hasten the event and, one evening, I became a little bolder. She received me in such a manner that I refrained from any new attempts; but a strong desire took possession of me to make her pay, in some manner, for the strict supervision under which she had placed me, and I thought of an excellent plan.

You know Césarine, her maid, a pretty girl from Granville, where all the women are beautiful, and who is as blond as her mistress is dark. Well, one afternoon, I drew the soubrette into my room and slipping a hundred francs into her hand, I said:

"My child, do not be afraid, I only wish to do unto your mistress as she is doing to me."

The girl smiled slyly. I continued:

"I know that I am being spied upon day and

night. Some one watches me eat, drink, dress, shave and put on my socks, I know it ''

The girl stammered: '' Well . . . Monsieur . . .,'' and then was silent. I continued:

'' Do not deny that you sleep in the next room in order to observe whether I snore or talk in my sleep . . .! ''

She burst out laughing and said:

'' Well, Monsieur . . .'' And once more she stopped.

I became excited. '' Well, you understand, my child, that it is not fair that everything should be known about me and that I should know nothing about the person who is going to be my wife. I love her with all my heart. She has the face, and the heart, the wit of which I dream, in this respect I am the happiest of mortals; nevertheless, there are a few things which I would like to know.''

Césarine stuck the bill in her pocket. I understood that the bargain was struck.

'' Listen, my child, we men lay great stress on certain . . . physical details, which do not stop a woman from being charming, but which may detract from her value in our eyes. I am not asking you to tell me anything disagreeable about your mistress, nor even to admit to me her secret faults, if she has any. Only answer frankly to four or five questions which I am going to ask. You know Madame de Jadelle as well as you do yourself, since you dress and undress her daily. Well . . . tell me—is she as plump as she seems? ''

The little servant did not answer.

I went on:

'' See here, my child, you know that there are women who pad a little here, or there. Tell me, does she pad? ''

Césarine had dropped her eyes, she said shyly:

"Keep on asking, Monsieur; I will answer everything at once."

"Well, there are some women who are so knock-kneed that their knees hit at every step they take. There are others who are so bow-legged that their legs resemble the arches of a bridge. It is very pretty either way, but tell me how is your mistress?"

The little servant did not answer.

I continued:

"There are some who have a fat arm and a slim waist. There are some whose neck is all bones. All that is very pretty indeed; but I would like to know how your mistress is built. Tell me frankly and I will give you a lot more money. . . ."

Césarine looked at me and burst out laughing:

"Monsieur, except for the fact that Madame is dark, she is just like me."

Then she ran away.

I had been made ridiculous. I had been laughed at. I decided at least to revenge myself on the impertinent little servant.

An hour later, having unscrewed the lock of the room from which she watched my sleep, I quietly entered.

Toward midnight she arrived at her post of observation. I immediately followed her. When she noticed me she tried to cry out, but I stopped her mouth with my hand; and I soon convinced myself that Madame de Jadelle must be very well built.

Césarine and I became great friends. She was a splendid sample of the lower Normandy race, tall and slender. She lacked, perhaps, certain qualities which might have been overlooked by Henry IV. I

soon showed them to her, and as I adore perfume I gave her a bottle of lavender water.

My friendship with her enabled me to wait more patiently for Madame de Jadelle's decision. I became docile, quiet and obedient.

As for my fiancée, she must have found me charming, and I understood, by certain signs, that I was soon to be accepted. I was undoubtedly the happiest man in the world, waiting quietly, for the chaste kiss of the woman whom I loved, in the arms of a young and beautiful girl who was fond of me.

One evening, as we were coming back from our ride, Madame de Jadelle remarked that her grooms had not taken proper care of the horse which she was riding. She kept repeating: "Let them beware, let them beware, I know a way of catching them at it."

I slept soundly all night and awoke early, full of vim and vigor. I was accustomed, every morning, as soon as I was dressed, to smoke a cigarette in a tower of the castle, which one reached by a staircase which was lighted by a large window on the first floor. I followed my usual custom this morning.

I was advancing noiselessly in my felt slippers, when I noticed Césarine, leaning out of the window. I could not see the whole of her, but only the lower half of her body. I approached so slowly that the young girl did not hear me. Taking every precaution I came up close behind her. Quickly I threw my arms around her and imprinted a lover's greeting on her bare neck.

I was surprised. I smelt verbena! But I did not have time to think about that. I received a heavy blow or rather a punch in the face which almost broke my nose. I heard a cry which made my

hair stand on end. The person had turned around—it was Madame de Jadelle!

She beat the air with her hands, like a woman about to faint, gasped for a minute, and fled.

Ten minutes later, Césarine, dumfounded, brought a letter; I read: "Madame de Jadelle hopes that M. de Brives will rid her of his presence immediately."

I left.

Well, I am not yet comforted. I have attempted every means and every explanation to excuse myself for this mistake. All my measures have failed.

Ever since that time I have an inordinate love for verbena.

# THE LOVE OF LONG AGO

THE old-fashioned château was built on a wooded knoll in the midst of tall trees with dark-green foliage; the park extended to a great distance, in one direction to the edge of the forest, in another to the distant country. A few yards from the front of the house was a huge stone basin with marble ladies taking a bath; other basins were seen at intervals down to the foot of the slope, and a stream of water fell in cascades from one basin to another.

From the manor house, which preserved the grace of a superannuated coquette, down to the grottos incrusted with shell-work, where slumbered the loves of a bygone age, everything in this antique demesne had retained the physiognomy of former days. Everything seemed to speak still of ancient customs, of the manners of long ago, of former gallantries, and of the elegant trivialities so dear to our grandmothers.

In a parlor in the style of Louis XV, whose walls were covered with shepherds paying court to shepherdesses, beautiful ladies in hoop-skirts, and gallant gentlemen in wigs, a very old woman who seemed dead as soon as she ceased to move was almost lying down in a large easy-chair, at each side of which hung a thin, mummy-like hand.

Her dim eyes were gazing dreamily toward the distant horizon as if they sought to follow through the park the visions of her youth. Through the open window every now and then came a breath of air laden with the odor of grass and the perfume of flowers. It made her white locks flutter around her wrinkled forehead and old memories float through her brain.

Beside her, on a tapestried stool, a young girl with long, fair hair hanging in braids down her back, was embroidering an altar-cloth. There was a pensive expression in her eyes, and it was easy to see that she was dreaming, while her agile fingers flew over her work.

But the old lady turned round her head, and said:

"Berthe, read me something out of the newspapers, that I may still know sometimes what is going on in the world."

The young girl took up a newspaper, and cast a rapid glance over it.

"There is a great deal about politics, grandmamma; shall I pass that over?"

"Yes, yes, darling. Are there no love stories? Is gallantry, then, dead in France, that they no longer talk about abductions or adventures, as they did formerly?"

The girl made a long search through the columns of the newspaper.

"Here is one," she said. "It is entitled 'A Love Drama!'"

The old woman smiled through her wrinkles. "Read that for me," she said.

And Berthe commenced. It was a case of vitriol throwing. A wife, in order to avenge herself on her husband's mistress, had burned her face and eyes. She had left the Court of Assizes acquitted, declared to be innocent, amid the applause of the crowd.

The grandmother moved about excitedly in her chair, and exclaimed:

"This is horrible—why, it is perfectly horrible! See whether you can find anything else to read to me, darling."

Berthe again made a search; and farther down among the reports of criminal cases, she read:

"'Gloomy Drama. A shop girl, no longer young, allowed herself to be led astray by a young man. Then, to avenge herself on her lover, whose heart proved fickle, she shot him with a revolver. The unhappy man is maimed for life. The jury, all men of moral character, condoning the illicit love of the murderess, honorably acquitted her.'"

This time the old grandmother appeared quite shocked, and, in a trembling voice, she said:

"Why, you people are mad nowadays. You are mad! The good God has given you love, the only enchantment in life. Man has added to this gallantry the only distraction of our dull hours, and here you are mixing up with it vitriol and revolvers, as if one were to put mud into a flagon of Spanish wine."

Berthe did not seem to understand her grandmother's indignation.

"But, grandmamma, this woman avenged her-

self. Remember she was married, and her husband deceived her."

The grandmother gave a start.

"What ideas have they been filling your head with, you young girls of to-day?"

Berthe replied:

"But marriage is sacred, grandmamma."

The grandmother's heart, which had its birth in the great age of gallantry, gave a sudden leap.

"It is love that is sacred," she said. "Listen, child, to an old woman who has seen three generations, and who has had a long, long experience of men and women. Marriage and love have nothing in common. We marry to found a family, and we form families in order to constitute society. Society cannot dispense with marriage. If society is a chain, each family is a link in that chain. In order to weld those links, we always seek metals of the same order. When we marry, we must bring together suitable conditions; we must combine fortunes, unite similar races, and aim at the common interest, which is riches and children. We marry only once, my child, because the world requires us to do so, but we may love twenty times in one lifetime because nature has made us like this. Marriage, you see, is law, and love is an instinct, which impels us sometimes along a straight and sometimes along a devious path. The world has made laws to combat our instincts—it was necessary to make them; but our instincts are always stronger, and we ought not to resist them too much, because they come from God, while the laws only come from men. If we did not perfume life with love, as much love as possible, darling, as we put sugar into drugs for children, nobody would care to take it just as it is."

Berthe opened her eyes wide in astonishment. She murmured:

"Oh! grandmamma, we can only love once."

The grandmother raised her trembling hands toward Heaven, as if again to invoke the defunct God of gallantries. She exclaimed indignantly:

"You have become a race of serfs, a race of common people. Since the Revolution, it is impossible any longer to recognize society. You have attached big words to every action, and wearisome duties to every corner of existence; you believe in equality and eternal passion. People have written poetry telling you that people have died of love. In my time poetry was written to teach men to love every woman. And we! when we liked a gentleman, my child, we sent him a page. And when a fresh caprice came into our hearts, we were not slow in getting rid of the last lover—unless we kept both of them."

The old woman smiled with a keen smile, and a gleam of roguery twinkled in her gray eye, the intellectual, skeptical roguery of those people who did not believe that they were made of the same clay as the others, and who lived as masters for whom common beliefs were not made.

The young girl, turning very pale, faltered out:

"So, then, women have no honor?"

The grandmother ceased to smile. If she had kept in her soul some of Voltaire's irony, she had also a little of Jean Jacques's glowing philosophy:

"No honor! because we loved, and dared to say so, and even boasted of it? But, my child, if one of us, among the greatest ladies in France, were to live without a lover, she would have the entire court laughing at her. Those who wished to live differently had only to enter a convent. And you im-

agine, perhaps, that your husbands will love but you alone, all their lives. As if, indeed, this could be the case! I tell you that marriage is a thing necessary in order that society should exist, but it is not in the nature of our race, do you understand? There is only one good thing in life, and that is love. And how you misunderstand it! how you spoil it! You treat it as something solemn like a sacrament, or something to be bought, like a dress."

The young girl caught the old woman's trembling hands in her own.

"Hold your tongue, I beg you, grandmamma!"

And, on her knees, with tears in her eyes, she prayed to Heaven to bestow on her a great passion, one sole, eternal passion in accordance with the dream of modern poets, while the grandmother, kissing her on the forehead, quite imbued still with that charming, healthy reason with which gallant philosophers tinctured the thought of the eighteenth century, murmured:

"Take care, my poor darling! If you believe in such folly as that, you will be very unhappy."

## JULOT'S OPINION

THE Duchesse Huguette de Lionzac was very much pleased with herself, but then she had a right to be so, and who, in her place, would not have shown a dash of conceit? There was no success she had wished for that she had not attained. She had received a medal for sculpture at the Salon, and at the *Exhibition des Excessives,* she had shown a water-color that had looked eccentric even there.

She had published a collection of poems which was crowned by the French Academy, and a small volume entitled *Rhythmic Prose* of which the *Revue de demain* said: "It shows the most subtle and evanescent performance of those fugitive pieces that are sure to descend to posterity"; and when she acted in private theatricals, some exclaimed: "It is better than the *Comédie Française,*" while others, who were more

refined, went so far as to utter the supreme praise: "Better than the *Théâtre Libre.*"

At one time there was a report, which had been propagated by the newspapers, that she was about to appear at the *Opéra Comique,* in a part that had been written especially for her extraordinary voice, for it appeared that Massenet would not hear of anybody else for the rôle.

She was the circus-rider, "Miss Edith," who, under that assumed name gave that unique and memorable exhibition of horsemanship, and you remember what cheers there were, and what quantities of flowers covered the arena! And you must not forget that this was before a paying public!

Then it was notorious that she had carried off the lovers of several celebrated ladies of the gay world, which was not one of the smallest of her triumphs, for she had chosen as her rivals some of those terrible and hitherto unconquered women, of whom it was said:

"Oh, when she has got hold of a man, she does not let him go again. She has some secret, that attaches them to her."

There was, therefore, nothing surprising in the fact, that the Duchesse Huguette should have been so proud of her many victories, and in such various sports; but now, for the first time, a doubt had entered her mind. In turning over the *Psychological Notes* of her favorite novel-writer, she read two sentences that disturbed her:

"If anyone wishes to excel in an art, he must have gained a living by it."

"What pleases us in a woman of the world who gives herself up to a gay life is the contrast between what she is and what she would like to be."

She asked herself whether she could really have lived by those arts in which she excelled, and whether the successes that she had obtained did not chiefly depend on her charm of a woman of the world, who wished to be taken what she was not. The last *whether,* especially, made her anxious. For was it not precisely that special charm which had given her an advantage over women who employed secrets.

Would she have been victorious had she been deprived of that weapon? How could she find out?

"And yet," she said to herself, "I must know, for everything depends on this point. If I can win the game without playing that card, I am sure of all my other triumphs; my mind will be easy then, whatever it may cost."

She consulted her old godfather, the Viscount Hugues de Pierras on the subject, and, after a few complimentary words, as she had begged him to be sincere, he said:

"Good heavens! my dear child, I must confess that your deductions are not altogether wrong, nor your apprehensions either. I have, before now, left many learned sweethearts for women who were not in the least learned, and who pleased me all the better on that account. But that did not prevent the women I had sacrificed from being possessed of incomprehensible talents, in spite of their defeat. But what does that matter? It ought to be enough for you that you conquer, without troubling yourself about the means by which you obtain your victory. I do not suppose that you have any pretensions to being a *virtuosa.* . . ."

"In everything, yes. Excuse me, godfather, I have such pretensions. And what I ask of you is

the means of obtaining absolute proof that my pretensions are justified."

"Hum! Hum!" the Viscount said, in some embarrassment, "I do not know of any means, my dear child, unless we get together a jury. . . ."

"Please do not joke about it!" Huguette exclaimed.

"I am perfectly serious."

"I am very serious also, I assure you. I think that a jury——"

"Composed of whom? Of men of the world, I suppose—Julot, for instance, commonly called 'the Epicure.'"

"And what does this Julot do?"

"Oh! really Duchesse, you force me to speak of persons and things which. . . ."

"Yes, yes, I force you to; we understand that. But tell me! Bluntly, without mincing matters, if necessary. You know that I have no objection to that sort of thing, so go on. Do not keep me in suspense like this. I am burning with curiosity. What does Julot do?"

"Very well, little volunteer, if you insist on knowing, I will tell you. Julot, generally called *Fine-Gueule,* makes experiments in love."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I will explain it to you. There are a few of us old amateurs in Paris, who are too old and impatient to hunt for truffles, but who want them of such and such a flavor, exactly to our taste. Now Julot knows our tastes, our various fancies, and he undertakes. . . ."

"Capital! capital!"